

THE GHOST IN THE SHELL 攻殻機動隊

MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE

MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE CONTROL PREFERENCES

LEVEL-1 CONE

SHIROW MASAMUNE

MATURE
CONTENT

THE GHOST IN THE SHELL
MAN - MACHINE INTERFACE

攻殻機動隊

STORY AND ART BY
SHIROW MASAMUNE



Ghost in the Shell 2
KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

STORY AND ART BY Shirow Masamune

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OPEN

MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE CONTROL PREFERENCES



WARNING: READ ME FIRST!

Readers may note that certain panels seem to have been inadvertently left unreversed or have incongruous backwards lettering. These were artistic decisions made by Mr. Shirow during the production of the mirror-imaged foreign edition of *Man-Machine Interface*. — Dark Horse Comics and Studio Proteus



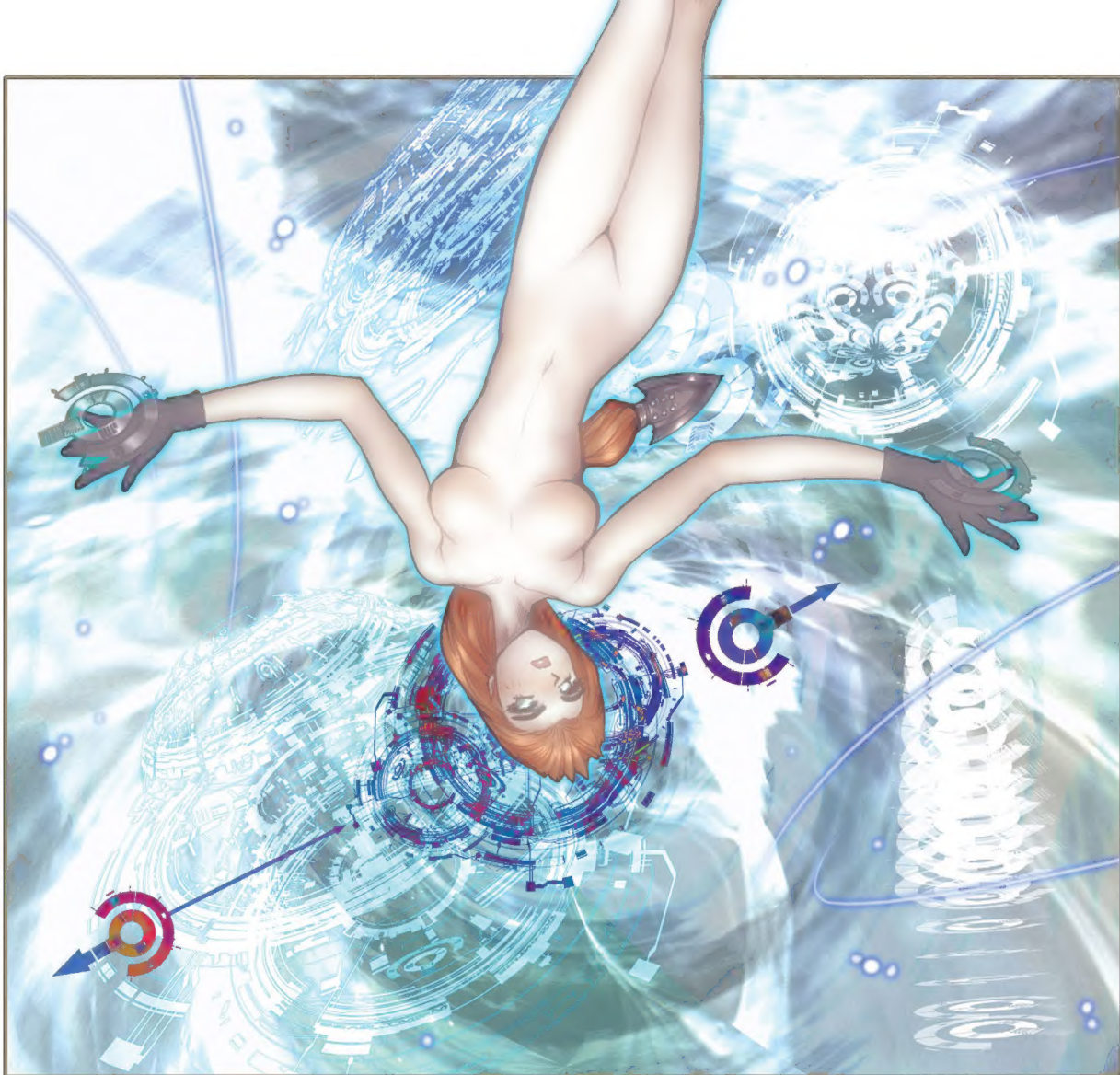
The various situations, explanations, and concepts that appear in this book are a product of my wild imagination, a form of entertainment with no connection to reality. Take according to directions, and enjoy. Be advised that the author assumes no responsibility for any collateral damage resulting from improper use of the various constructs, fabrications, and gimmicks in the story.

APOLOGIES AND CORRECTIONS

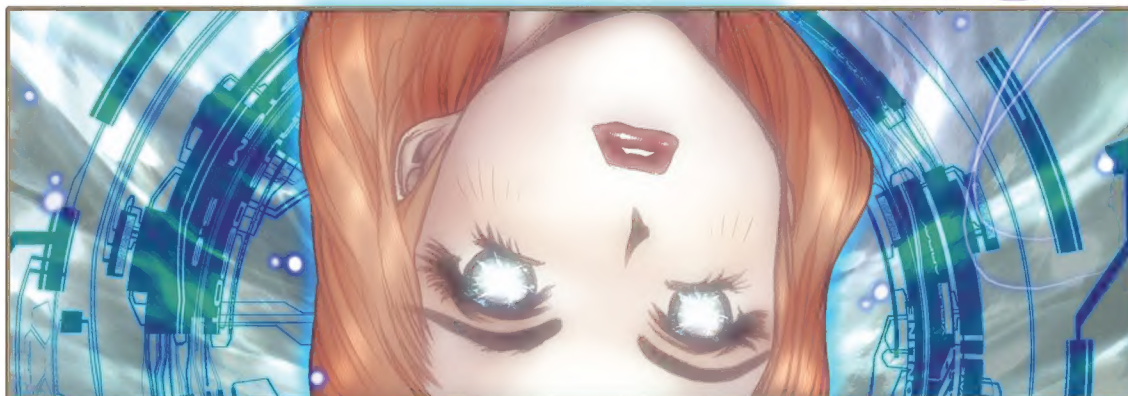
In the *Ghost in the Shell* graphic novel published in 1991, the heroine, Motoko Kusanagi, fused with a self-described “intelligent life-form” and left Section 9 of the Public Security Bureau. This story takes place approximately four years and five months later. As a result, this story is quite different from what was originally called *Ghost in the Shell* and featured Public Security’s Section 9 (the Special Assault Force). I thought of visually differentiating the new Japanese title from the old one by merely changing the last kanji character, from one that means “military unit” to the homophonic kanji for “body” or “form” (which would shift the meaning of “mobile force” or “riot squad” to something like “mobile-unit-body-entity”), but for a variety of reasons I decided not to do so. To those readers expecting a direct continuation of the prior storyline, I apologize and beg for your understanding. I’m sorry, folks!

— Shirow Masamune





Motoko is a hyper-advanced cyborg—her body consists of all of her active drives; her memory of all of her active sources. These are all variable, but on a periodic basis her bio-components crave energy and sleep and remind her of her basic identity-layer. To her, the physical world and the world of information are both reality. All existence is life, destined to continue for the unforeseeable future.



攻殻機動隊 2 MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE

This is a conceptual representation of the largest e-brain network Motoko can perceive, or sense. It's a complex intertwining of tendrils in what appears to be a tree-like structure, but it is actually too large to grasp in its totality. Far, far off in the distance three giant lights are shining, functioning almost like a North Star. Motoko has tried several times to move closer to them but had no success as they are too far away...and something seems to block her progress. The three lights consist of two giant orbs and one that is about twenty percent smaller and of a different nature. There are always extremely active visual phenomena, like lightning or solar prominences, flaring back and forth among the lights.

M A S A M U N E S H I R O W



IN THE PROFESSOR'S BOOK IT SAYS THE UNIVERSE BEGAN WITH AN ELEMENTAL BIG BANG, THAT IT IS NOW COOLING AND CRYSTALLIZING, AND THAT LIFE IS THE MOST EFFICIENT SYSTEM TO PROMOTE COMPLEXITY PRIOR TO FINAL CRYSTALLIZATION.

SO THE UNIVERSE WILL BE AT ITS MOST COMPLEX FORM WHEN IT'S COOLEST...?

01 PROLOGUE 2035.03.06.AM05:05

IT SEEMS LIKE A COMPLEX UNIVERSE OUGHT TO BE ACTIVE, AND HOT...

...DON'T YOU THINK?

WELL, IT'S A WORLD OF ELECTRONS AND EFFICIENCY...

"CRYSTALLIZATION" here refers to a state where complexity is no longer increasing.



TAMAKI TAMAI,
PSYCHIC
INVESTIGATOR
FROM THE
CHANNELING
AGENCY, AT
YOUR SERVICE.

INSTABILITY OCCURS EVERY THOUSAND
YEARS IN THE THREE TREES OF THE
JIZAITEN SPACE-TIME UNIVERSE.

YES,
SIR.

YOU HAVE BEEN
SPECIALLY
CHOSEN FOR THIS
ASSIGNMENT,
O SEEKER. WE NEED
YOU TO INVESTIGATE
THE APPEARANCE
OF ONE OF THE
MOST COMPLEX
PHENOMENA IN THE
KNOWN UNIVERSE...

WE'RE
PREPARED TO
INTERVENE
WHEN
APPROPRIATE
IF THERE ARE
ANY SECURITY-
RELATED
ISSUES...

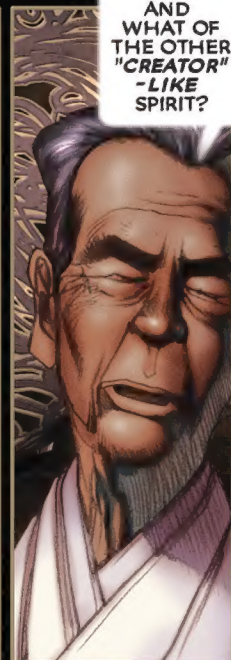
...BUT
BASICALLY
WE INTEND TO
LEAVE
THE
DECISION UP
TO ISUZU,
HERE.

JIZAITEN here refers to a temporal and spatial concept of the structure of the universe. It is represented by the image (or, more accurately, the reflection in the spirit realm) of three "tree" or "forked" structures, called *sansagi*. There are sixty-four strata of irreversibly ordered elements that move in precise sequence about the three trees, and one full cycle of their movement is equivalent to the life of the universe. It's certainly one of the more unique concepts to come out of the human brain.



PROFESSOR RAHAMPOL, WHO IS SAID TO BE THE CREATOR OF THOSE-
WHO-ARE-COMPLEX,
WAS ATTACKED AND
KILLED BY PIRATES ON
THE OPEN SEA AFTER
MEETING WITH
SOME EAST INDIAN
MATHEMATICIANS.

YES. WE'VE
ALREADY
CONFIRMED
THAT
THROUGH THE
MDF CRUISER
SHIRASU,
AND SPECIAL
FORCES.



AND
WHAT OF
THE OTHER
"CREATOR"
-LIKE
SPIRIT?



MULTIPLE
SHADOWS ARE
SHIFTING, AND I
CAN'T CONFIRM
IT COMPLETELY,
BUT...

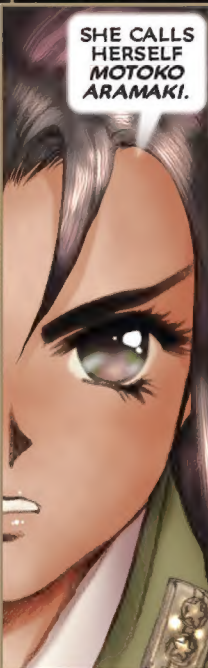
...THERE
APPEARS
TO BE NO
CHANGE.

....



AS FAR AS WE
KNOW, SHE HAS
ALREADY FUSED
WITH FOUR KEY
SPIRITS, THE
MOST RECENT
BEING EIGHTEEN
MONTHS AGO...

HER TEMPORARY
POST-FUSION
CHAOS SEEMS TO
HAVE CEASED,
AND SHE IS NOW
QUITE STABLE.



SHE CALLS
HERSELF
MOTOKO
ARAMAKI.

THE TIME IS
APPROACHING
FOR YOU TO
CARRY OUT YOUR
ASSIGNMENT
WITH UTMOST
DEVOTION.



YES,
SIR.

N13'10'32.9 E148'22'45.6

LOCATION: ON THE OPEN SEA, 153 MINUTES FROM THE CONTROL AREA OF THE FLOATING CITY OF POSEIDON.
SPEED: FIFTEEN KNOTS.



ROCKY,
CONAN...
RECHECK
THE
E-BRAIN
PROTEC-
TION
SETTINGS.

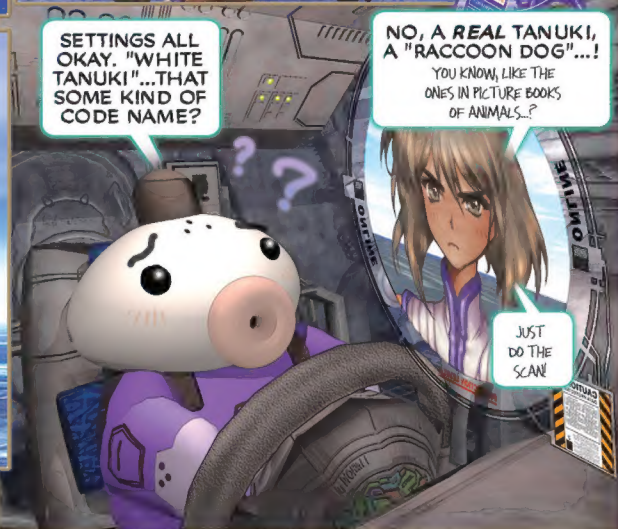
IF EVERY-
THING'S
OKAY, I
WANT YOU
TO SCAN
FOR A
WHITE
TANUKI
ON THE DECK...

A
WHAAAA...?!

SETTINGS ALL
OKAY. "WHITE
TANUKI"...THAT
SOME KIND OF
CODE NAME?

NO, A REAL TANUKI,
A "RACCOON DOG"...!
YOU KNOW, LIKE THE
ONES IN PICTURE BOOKS
OF ANIMALS...?

JUST
DO THE
SCAN!





It's easy to shrug off psychic phenomena as being "unscientific," but assuming the person experiencing them isn't totally faking it, it's probably more scientific to consider such experiences in psychological or neuro-physiological terms. They could, for example, be considered the result of "naturally-occurring magnetic or electrical phenomena that affect the brain," or they could be analyzed as a type of "mass hypnosis," etc. It's unscientific to laugh off poorly understood phenomena instead of trying to analyze them.

THE
DOCTOR'S
SHIP IS
SURFACING...

IT'S THE SAME
TYPE AS BEFORE--
THE SEVENTH *SPB*
DELIVERED TO
THE U.S. NAVY IN
FISCAL 2026 BY
NMD, INC.

DOES THE
NAVY STILL
THINK THEY
ORDERED AND
PURCHASED
SIX?

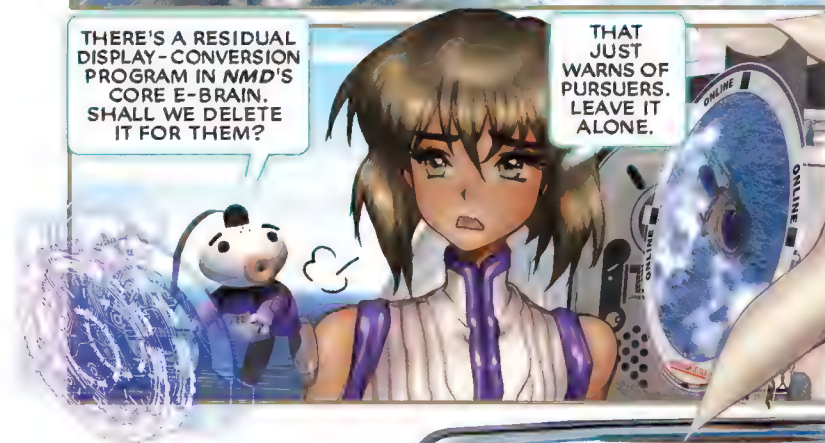
LEMME
CHECK.
HEH,
HEH...



MAYBE WE
SHOULD
ENCOURAGE
OUR
PURSUER A
BIT, AND
SEE HOW
HE
RESPONDS.

THERE'S A RESIDUAL
DISPLAY-CONVERSION
PROGRAM IN *NMD*'S
CORE E-BRAIN.
SHALL WE DELETE
IT FOR THEM?

THAT
JUST
WARNS OF
PURSUERS.
LEAVE IT
ALONE.





FLYING SHIP
CONFIRMED AT 27°6',
AZIMUTH 7°, APPARENTLY
LINKING WITH THE DOCTOR...

IT'S A PHASED
ARRAY
MEASUREMENT.

FLYING
SHIP HAS
LAUNCHED
TWO RRVs,
NOW HEADED
TOWARD US...

THEY'RE JUST
SCOUTING.

LAST TIME
THEY USED
MACKEREL-
SHAPED
AQUATIC
RRVs, AND
THOSE GOT
EATEN BY
SHARKS.

GUN STATION
3 NOW
LOCKED ON
TARGET.

THE DOCTOR'S
APPROACHING
VISUAL RANGE.

RRVs
PASSING
OVERHEAD...
NOW.

JUDGING
BY THE
RESOLUTION
OF THEIR CCD
CAMERAS,
WE'VE GOT
THE EDGE.

NOT SO
FAST.
REMEMBER,
NEVER
UNDER-
ESTIMATE
THE
DOCTOR!

Normally the Robotic Reconnaissance Vehicles (RRVs) would be flying further apart, but I put them close together because it makes for a better illustration.



Military ships in this era are semi-submersible in style, with the upper bulwarks done in "dazzle ships" camouflage (against satellites and anti-sub craft). In emergencies, smaller ships surface and move at high speed on hydrofoils, usually using solar power generators. Many have catamaran hulls and magnetic propulsion systems. Here, the Doctor seems to be demonstrating to Motoko that he means no harm.

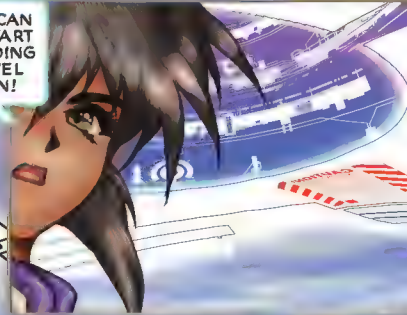





IT'S SURE WEIRD...



DO A SCAN
AND START
RECORDING
AT LEVEL
SEVEN!






SO. HAVE YOU BEEN USING MY CREATION WELL?

EXCUSE ME. FOOLISH QUESTION.

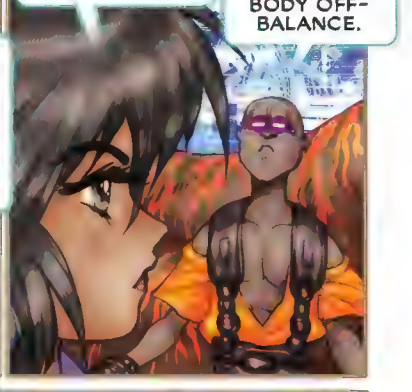
ANYTHING TO REPORT FROM THE FIELD?



SPLITTING UP THESE MUSCLES AND CREATING A COMPOUND BOWGUN WAS AN EXCELLENT IDEA.

UNDER NORMAL MOVEMENTS THE OUTPUT CURVE IS REVERSED AT THE HIGH END...

I WISH THE MINIGRENADES HADN'T BEEN SHRUNK QUITE SO MUCH, BUT I KNOW THERE WERE SPACE CONSTRAINTS.



YOU COULD CREATE A SINGLE-ACTION PROTOTYPE MICROBOW FOR A WRIST GUARD AND MAKE THE EXPLOSIVE CORE HALF-SIZE...

AH, BUT PLAYING AROUND WITH TOO MANY TOYS LIKE THAT WOULD THROW YOUR BODY OFF-BALANCE.



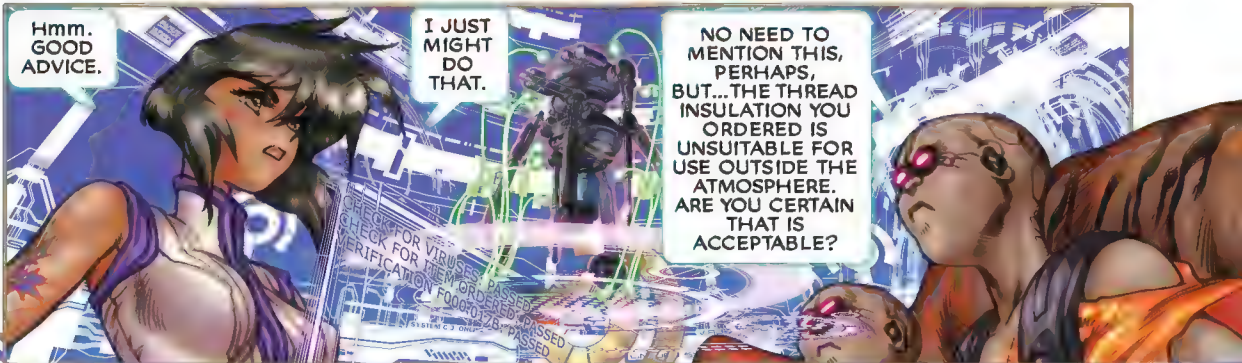
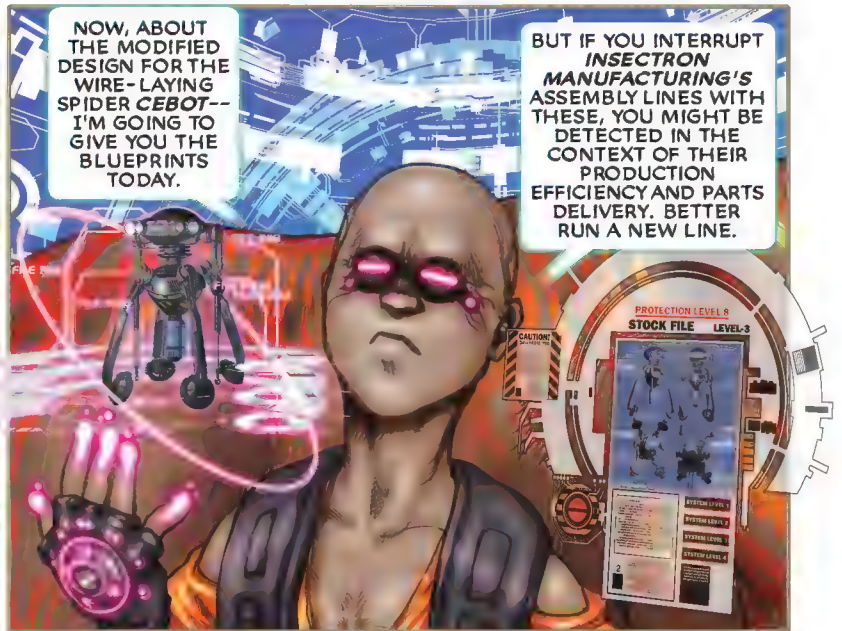
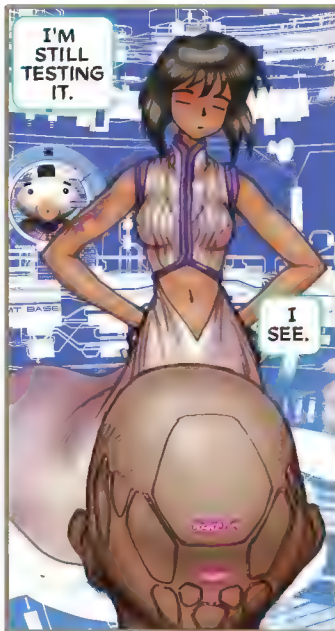
SURELY YOU COULD MAKE 'EM SO THEY DON'T AFFECT MY BALANCE!



PLANNING TO KNOCK DOWN FLYING CONNECTOR PLUGS WITH YOUR ARMS IN THE FUTURE...?

DID YOU USE THE NEW PROSTHETIC FLOAT MATERIAL? AT THE MAX DEPTH WE SPECIFIED, THERE SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM WITH CATASTROPHIC COLLAPSE.

A "CEBOT" is a robot in the centimeter-size class.



The "thread" referred to here is laid down to transmit signals. It's not the sort of lifeline thread a spider would use to physically connect itself to its web.





THIS IS THE SOUTH SHORE AREA OF **HANAVA**, AN INDUSTRIAL CITY IN CENTRAL NAJIQ.

IT'S THE MANUFACTURING BASE FOR A SEMI-GOVERNMENTAL CORPORATION CALLED **MATRIKA**.

TWO HOURS AGO A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION WAS STAGED HERE OVER UNPAID BACK WAGES.

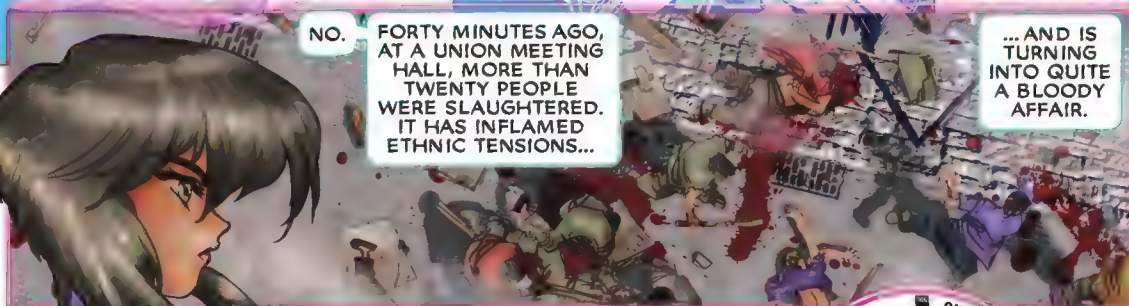
YOU'RE NOT SAYING I'M THE REASON MATRIKA'S HOME ROBOTS AREN'T SELLING WELL, ARE YOU? I BOUGHT AND USE **THREE** OF THEM!

THEIR DRAIN CLEANING CEBOT IS REALLY GOOD...



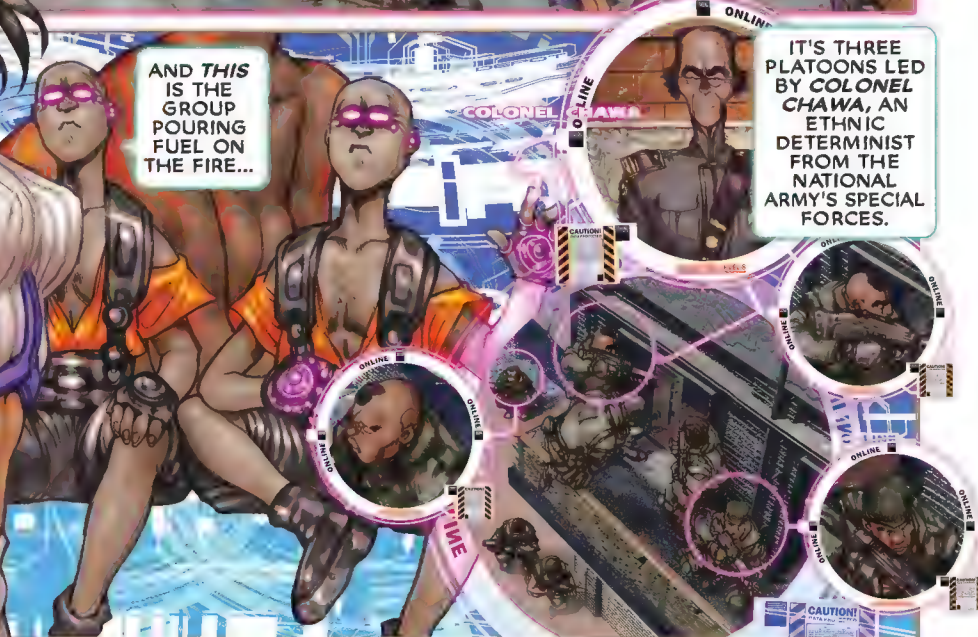
NO. FORTY MINUTES AGO, AT A UNION MEETING HALL, MORE THAN TWENTY PEOPLE WERE SLAUGHTERED. IT HAS INFLAMED ETHNIC TENSIONS...

...AND IS TURNING INTO QUITE A BLOODY AFFAIR.



AND THIS IS THE GROUP POURING FUEL ON THE FIRE...

IT'S THREE PLATOONS LED BY **COLONEL CHAWA**, AN ETHNIC DETERMINIST FROM THE NATIONAL ARMY'S SPECIAL FORCES.



DETERMINIST: A general term applied to those who reject compromise and assimilation and insist that others be of a specific ethnicity, race, religion, or faction. Everyone's entitled to make harsh demands of themselves, of course, but making them of others is an unwelcome disservice.



I WANT YOU TO STOP THESE THUGS BEFORE THE PLACE FALLS INTO CIVIL WAR AND A NEIGHBORING STATE OR A U.N. MULTINATIONAL FORCE HAS TO INTERVENE.

NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THE EFFECT YOU'LL HAVE ON THE RIOT ITSELF.



BUT YOU DON'T WANT ME TO TOTALLY BLOW MY COVER AND STRENGTHEN THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT FORCES' POSITION, RIGHT?

ACTUALLY, THAT'S NOT SO IMPORTANT.

WELL, I WON'T ASK ANY MORE QUESTIONS, THEN.

I'VE CONFIRMED THE RIOT BY SATELLITE, BOSS.



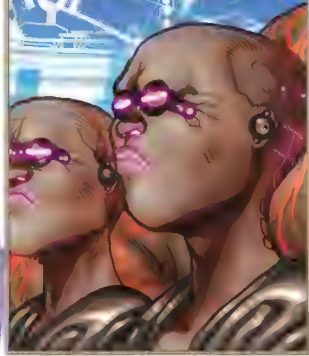
CHUI! SHIVA! GET ME INFO FROM THE U.N. AND THE U.S. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT. DELTA-VEE THE RELAY SATELLITE'S ORBIT FOR BACK-UP PLAN BETA, AND BE BATTLE-READY!

HANNIBAL! ACTIVATE DECOT "CLARA II" ON SYSLINK C.01! STANDBY WITH MOTO-CHAN'S BASAKA-PAK CHEMBOOST "ULTRA VIOLENCE"....!

YES, MA'AM!

MORE DATA-- THE SOLDIERS DON'T BOTHER TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITIES BECAUSE THEY'RE AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN, NOT BECAUSE THEY'RE POORLY TRAINED. THEY'RE AN ELITE GROUP, AND THEY INCLUDE TWELVE SOLDIERS WITH ADVANCED PROSTHETICS.

NO USE WARNING HER ABOUT THAT.

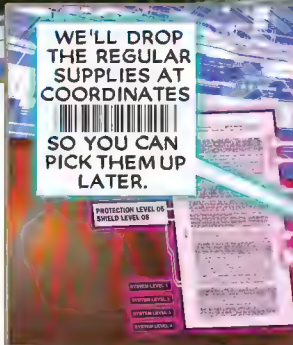




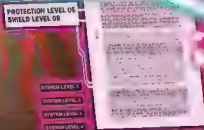
I'LL NEED AT
LEAST FIVE HOURS
BEFORE I START
THE OP.

BY THE WAY,
DOCTOR...THIS SORT
OF DIRTY WORK IS
OKAY SOMETIMES, BUT
ONCE IN A WHILE IT'D
BE NICE TO HAVE AN
ASSIGNMENT THAT'S A
LITTLE MORE ELEGANT
AND MEANINGFUL.

OH,
REALLY...?



WE'LL DROP
THE REGULAR
SUPPLIES AT
COORDINATES
SO YOU CAN
PICK THEM UP
LATER.



BY THE
WAY...WHY
DO YOU
ALWAYS
INSIST ON
BEING
DIRECT-
WIRED?

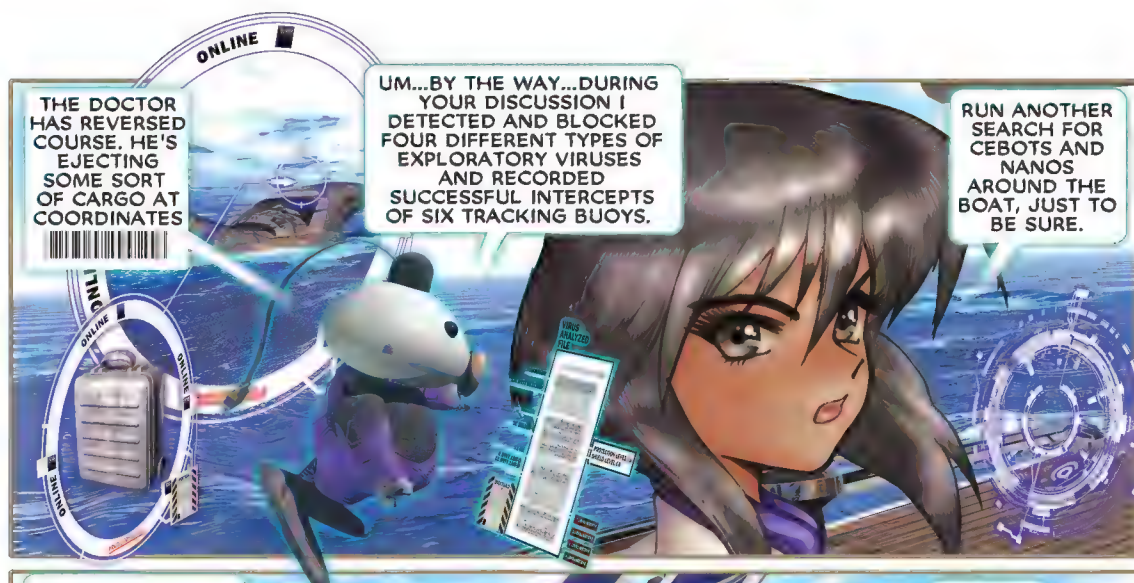


ME?!

AH...FORGET
I ASKED.
GOOD LUCK
ON THE JOB.



??



DECOT: A word derived from "decoy" and "robot," normally used to refer to remotely controlled prosthetic bodies, etc. Coined during wartime, it's not the perfect term in this case, but it's commonly used in Motoko's world.

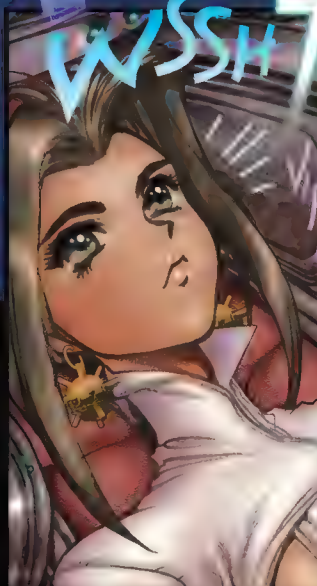


RETURN
COMPLETE.



SWITCHING
MAIN
SYSTEM
BACK TO
NORMAL.

GIVE ME
A SYSTEM
CHECK
REPORT.



CLEAR BATTLE STATUS
AND ENGAGE DEFENSIVE
MODE! WAIT THIRTY
SECONDS AND THEN TURN OFF
THE NAVILINK CONNECTION
TO THE SURFACE!

YES,
MA'AM!



Note: The "P.I. UNIT" lettering has been left reversed at Mr. Shirow's request.

THE DOC
THINKS I
LIKE BEING
WIRED, EH?
WONDER IF
HE DETECTED
THIS SHIP-
SUB LINK?

CONAN! ADD
THE DOCTOR'S
LATEST REQUEST TO
HIS PREVIOUS ONES,
AND ESTIMATE HIS
DEBT/EQUITY
POSITION BASED ON
THE ADVANTAGES
HE ACCRUES.

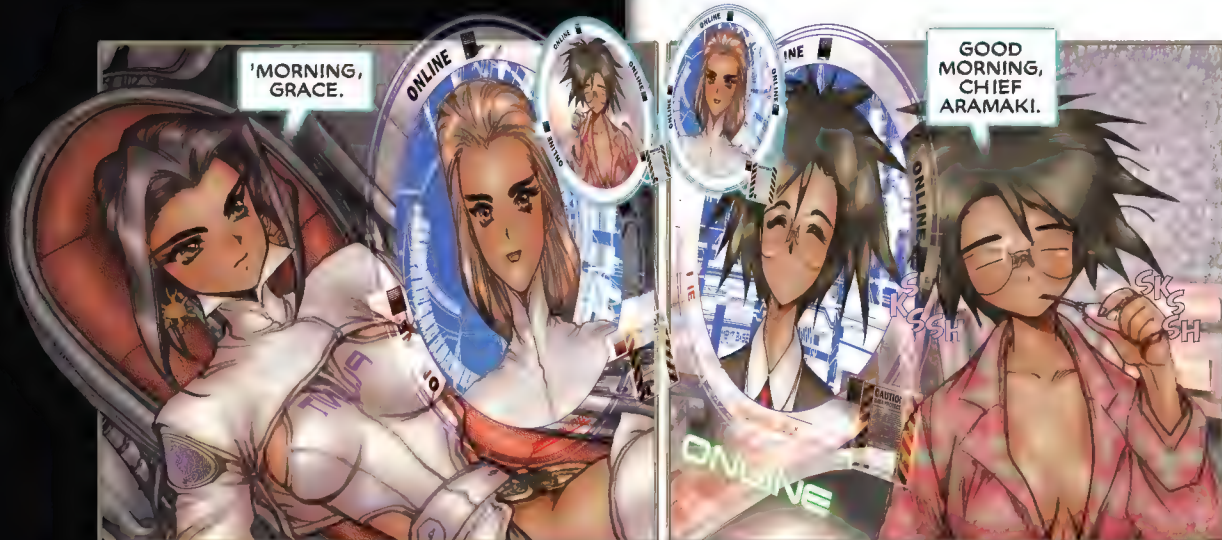
HONORED
TO DO SO,
KIND
MISTRESS.

GOT A CALL FROM
EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY GRACE
AT POSEIDON.

IT'S THE
REGULAR
MORNING
BRIEFING.
STILL, BETTER
RUN IT
THROUGH THE
ARMORED
VPN.

ALL CLEAR. NOW
CONNECTING...

PROTECT LEVEL 15
ACCESS DECOY X4



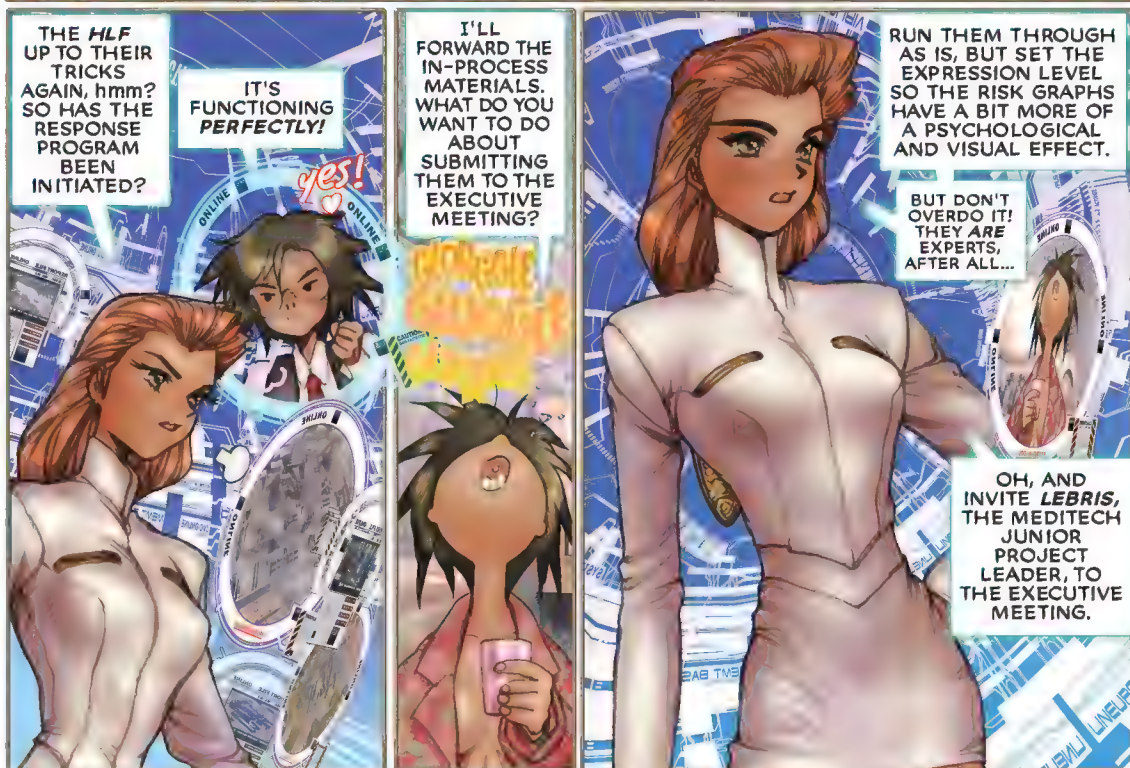
'MORNING, GRACE.

GOOD MORNING, CHIEF ARAMAKI.



THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE IN TODAY'S PLANS. AN URGENT EXECUTIVE MEETING IS BEING CONVENED AT 08:05 REGARDING THE FOLLOWING URGENT EVENT--

--AT 07:42 HOURS, HQ TIME, A LEVEL ORANGE DESTRUCTIVE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE AT MEDITECH BHEREL'S EASTERN MONNABIA PLANT #2.



THE HLF UP TO THEIR TRICKS AGAIN, hmm? SO HAS THE RESPONSE PROGRAM BEEN INITIATED?

IT'S FUNCTIONING PERFECTLY!

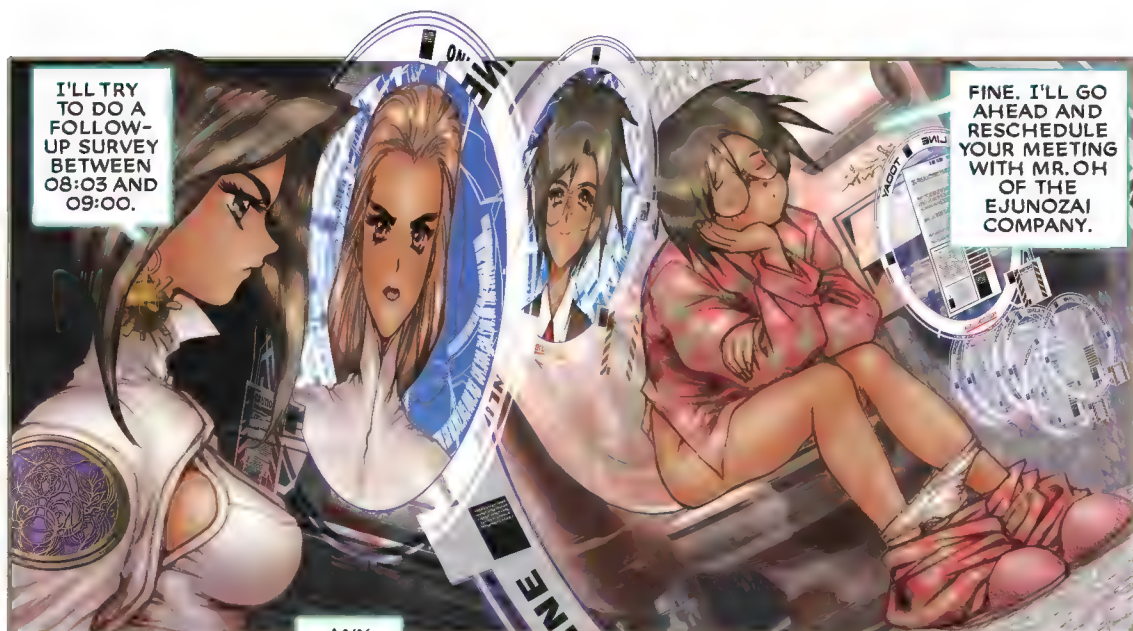
I'LL FORWARD THE IN-PROCESS MATERIALS. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO ABOUT SUBMITTING THEM TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING?

RUN THEM THROUGH AS IS, BUT SET THE EXPRESSION LEVEL SO THE RISK GRAPHS HAVE A BIT MORE OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND VISUAL EFFECT.

BUT DON'T OVERDO IT! THEY ARE EXPERTS, AFTER ALL...

OH, AND INVITE **LEBRIS**, THE MEDITECH JUNIOR PROJECT LEADER, TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING.

HLF: Human Liberation Front



I'LL TRY TO DO A FOLLOW-UP SURVEY BETWEEN 08:03 AND 09:00.

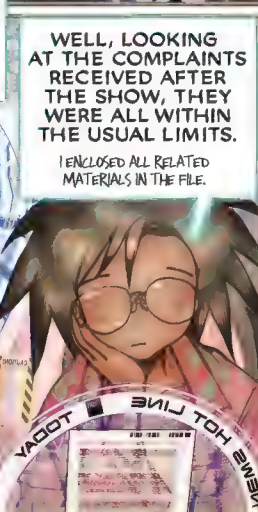
FINE. I'LL GO AHEAD AND RESCHEDULE YOUR MEETING WITH MR.OH OF THE EJUNOZAI COMPANY.



I RECORDED THE "ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE, ONE HUNDRED SHAPES" LECTURE GIVEN BY PROFESSOR REPLIANO ON NWN, AND PUT IT IN THE QUEUE.



ANY MAJOR GAFFES THIS TIME...?



WELL, LOOKING AT THE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AFTER THE SHOW, THEY WERE ALL WITHIN THE USUAL LIMITS. I ENCLOSED ALL RELATED MATERIALS IN THE FILE.



A BIT OF A PROBLEM "WITHIN THE USUAL LIMITS" WOULD ACTUALLY BE BETTER...

... ESPECIALLY SINCE HE'S THE MAN IN CHARGE OF RELIGIOUS ISSUES AT OUR PRECIOUS POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL COMPANY.



MISTRESS...? WE'RE HAVING DIFFICULTY PINNING DOWN THE DOCTOR'S POSITION. FACTORS OFFSETTING IT AVERAGE 32%...

OKAY.

LEX! KEEP CRUISING UNDERWATER AND DOING PULSE CLEANING FOR THIRTY MINUTES, THEN FULL SPEED FOR HEADQUARTERS.

CONAN! STAND BY FOR ENTRY TO HQ AREA 78!

YES'M!

THE RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY SCREENING OF THREE HEADHUNTED CANDIDATES HAVE ARRIVED FROM THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT.

I THINK WE CAN PRESENT THEM AT NINE ALONG WITH THE RESULTS FROM THE ERIN GROUP.

NOW THAT THEY'VE BEEN VERIFIED BY THE SURVEY COMPANY.

FOR LUNCH TODAY, WOULD PREDONYA OFRA AND KUSTON CAKE BE ACCEPTABLE?

AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T PREVENT MR. JURIDI FROM JOINING US FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS.

I'M GOING TO BE OUT ON PRIVATE BUSINESS IN THE AFTERNOON. WE'LL HAVE TO PUT A HOLD ON THE FELDONA & RICARDO GROUP'S LINEAR LAUNCH ANTI-TERROR WEAPON TEST.

RELAY THE REPORT, GIVING PRIORITY TO THE RIOT AT HANAVA IN CENTRAL NAJIQ!

RIGHT AWAY, CHIEF.

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW, GRACE.

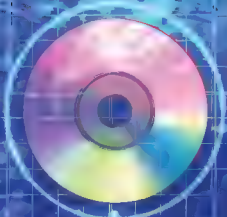
U N D E R W A T E R

SYSTEM MONITORING PREFERENCES

REPORT

LEVEL 01B V.T.F.

MOTOKO ASANAKI



ONLINE

ONLINE

HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN
HUMAN MACHINE MANMACHINE MACHINEMAN



PROTECTION LEVEL-8

02

2035.03.06.AM05:45

N26'04'12.2 E162'47'00.2

LOCATION: 11 MINUTES FROM THE CONTROL AREA OF
THE FLOATING CITY OF POSEIDON.
SPEED: FIFTEEN KNOTS, SUBMERGED.

WAAAAAT?!
NO WAY!

YOU MEAN
STATISTICS IS JUST
ANOTHER TYPE OF
ASTROLOGY?!

WHAT
WAS
THAT...?

AH, MISTRESS! WE'VE DISCOVERED
A SUSPICIOUS SHIP! WE'RE PUTTING
THE DATA TOGETHER NOW... ONE OF
OUR TOP COMMANDOS IS
PREPARING TO LAUNCH RIGHT AWAY.

DON'T FORGET MY
REPAIRS LATER!

LOOKS LIKE THEY
WON'T NOTICE US...
POP AN ANTENNA
BUOY AND
APPROACH THEM
FROM THE STERN.
STAND BY...

TARGET
CENTER
X: 0000M
Y: -050M
Z: -010M
+005M

ER,
MISTRESS...
WE ARRIVE
IN AREA 78
IN FIVE
MINUTES...

This is an extremely quiet environment. The ship uses noise-canceling superconductive ram propulsion and has auxillary muscle-powered wings. All conversation takes place within the participants' e-brains (and is thus Inaudible). And active sonar is rarely used in this age.

CHANGE
OF PLANS.
HOLD OFF
ON AREA
7B.



ROGER.

JANE FILE 2035 1.5.17.3006

IKURA, CLASS 244 MILOV

STANDARD
DISPLACEMENT: 1700 TONS
LENGTH: 60 METERS
SURFACE SPEED: 16 KNOTS
UNDERWATER
SPEED: 32 KNOTS (NOW 5 KNOTS)
LAUNCH TUBES: 4 (NOW ARMED)
INTERCEPTION SCENARIOS
POTENTIAL ARMAMENTS
CREW: 32 STANDARD, DETAILS UNKNOWN.
MAXIMUM SAFE DIVE DEPTH (OFFICIAL): 500 METERS
PASSIVE SONAR: BQQ-6, PLUS TASS CABLE
(UNCONFIRMED)
ACTIVE SONAR: "DOLPHIN" TYPE (POWERED DOWN)

2032: SHIP FIRST LAUNCHED
2034-03: VANISHES IN SOUTH CHINA SEA
2034-11: PIRATE ACTIVITIES OBSERVED
2035-01: SIGHTED IN WATERS OFF SYDNEY

SHIP HAS GRAFFITI ON HULL.
CONDITION OF EXTERIOR: GOOD TO AVERAGE.
(PRESSURE WARPING IN SPOTS HIGHLIGHTED.)
NO APPLICABLE FILE AVAILABLE IN POSEIDON B
SEA CONTROL ZONE.



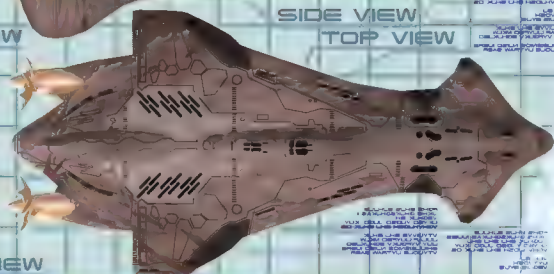
REAR VIEW



FRONT VIEW



SIDE VIEW
TOP VIEW



PIRATE
ACTIVITIES
IN THE
SOUTH
CHINA
SEA...?
SEEMS
AWFULLY
OUT OF
PLACE
HERE.

I WONDER IF
THEY'RE HERE
SCOUTING
BECAUSE
SOME CARGO
ROUTES WERE
CHANGED...
hmm.

OKAY,
"VOLUNTEER
COMMANDO,"
IT'S TIME TO
LAUNCH.

I WANT YOU TO
ATTACH A
PHYSICAL LINE AND
A COUPLE GPS
MINES TO THE SHIP
AND THEN RETURN.

AYE-AYE,
CAP'N!

BLBB
BLRB

DAMN



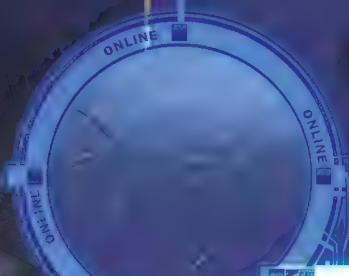
Newer torpedoes are designed to swim out of their launch tubes, so the noise previously generated during firing by the compressed-air "blow" is no longer a problem. In this case they're also using water currents generated by the propulsion system to augment initial speed. (In other words, the launch tubes also have vectored-thrust nozzles on them.) I should also mention the reason that neither ship has bubble maskers is because I decided it wouldn't look good visually.

ATTACH THE
DATALINE TO THEIR
TOWED ANTENNA,
AND DEPOSIT OUR
LITTLE GIFTS ON THE
SIDE VENTS NEAR
THE SUB'S ELEVATOR
PLANES.

GOTCHA,
BOSS.

VLF ANTENNA FEED HATCH

YEEEEK!



STARLIGHT VIEW

GUESS WE DO HAVE
TO ATTACH IT IF WE
WANT IT TO WORK
UNDERWATER.
SORRY, MA'AM.

FORGIVEN.

I'LL DO BETTER
THIS TIME...

COMM DEVICE
HAS FLOATED
UP, ALONG
WITH DECREASE
IN SHIP SPEED.
SETTING
SATELLITE
ARRAY... NOW
ACTIVATED.

BARRIERS, 11...
DECOYS, 8...
SUPPORTS, 2...
STAND BY!

NOW... LET'S
JUST HOPE
THEIR COMM
SPECIALIST'S
AN IDIOT WITH
A LOW-RES
E-BRAIN....

VLF: Very Low Frequency

DATALINE'S
CONNECTED... IF IT
WORKS CAN I RETURN
TO SHIP RIGHT AWAY,
PRETTY PLEASE?



Visual information taking place: no security
Virus Interceptor program active:
100% execution 306.157.24n
Detected types: 306 T4
New York 6523-08 T4
Arizola Type 225
Access points: Virus program activated
Intercept scenario: M20530 (execute)
MLOV warning panel: front of control center,
warning and recording panel layout

Hmph... THAT KIND
OF BARRIER MAZE IS
WORTHLESS. MIGHT
AS WELL DELETE
THE ALARMS, TOO.

CHEAP
MODS...
I LIKE
THIS!

ALL RIGHT--
AGENT MAY
RETURN TO
SHIP, NOW.

Hmm...



I know the way I drew the commando sent out from the sub seems absurd. Theoretically, I should have depicted him like other characters with a head and limbs and muscles, controlling a jet-propelled, streamlined undersea ROV (remotely operated vehicle), but that would have been boring. I know, even robots would find it rather hard to swim fast enough underwater to leave one moving sub and catch up to another...especially when wearing a life preserver! Maybe I should claim he's really inside a transparent squid-shaped ROV...or would that be pushing my luck?

WE'VE ENTERED
POSEIDON'S CONTROL
SECTOR FOUR. SAFETY
SENSORS ALL CLEAR.
NO CHANGE IN
SURROUNDING
CONDITIONS.

TARGET
PROCEEDING IN
SUBMERGED MODE.
TWO MINUTES TO
RETRIEVAL OF VLF
ANTENNA.

DAMN...
WOULDN'T
YOU KNOW IT?
NO SPECIFIC
PLAN OF
ACTION...NO
OP RECORD
EITHER.

JUST THE
BORING OLD
NAV LOG...
SHOULD I
PULL IT?

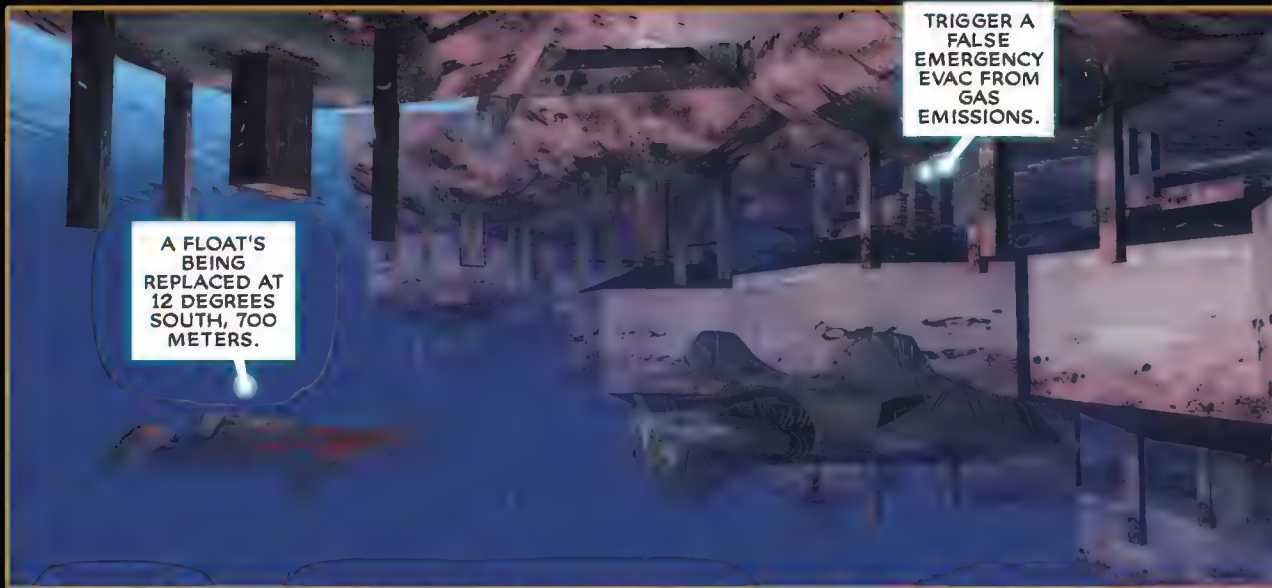
AH, WAIT
A SEC--HERE'S
THE CREW
RECOGNITION
FILE!

RUN A
CHECK ON
THESE GUYS
THROUGH
THE MILITARY
AND POLICE
CRIMINAL
DATABASES
OF ALL
NATIONS
AROUND THE
SOUTH CHINA
SEA, ON THE
DOUBLE!

PIRATE FILE 000.0001

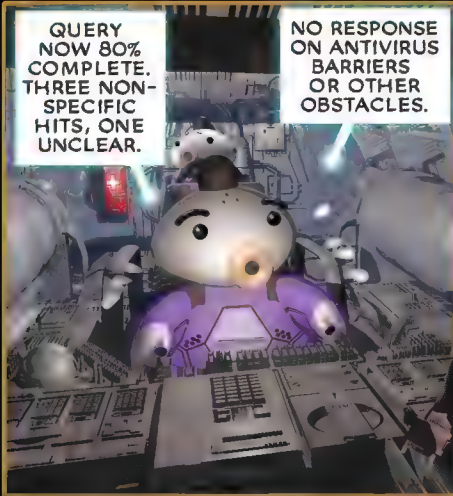


The slack in the wire is (supposed) to indicate the ship is slowing. The wire linking the pirate sub with Motoko's is for hacking purposes. There's a buoy on the end of the one trailing out the back of her sub, allowing UHF global connections via satellite.



A FLOAT'S
BEING
REPLACED AT
12 DEGREES
SOUTH, 700
METERS.

TRIGGER A
FALSE
EMERGENCY
EVAC FROM
GAS
EMISSIONS.



QUERY
NOW 80%
COMPLETE.
THREE NON-
SPECIFIC
HITS, ONE
UNCLEAR.

NO RESPONSE
ON ANTIVIRUS
BARRIERS
OR OTHER
OBSTACLES.



WHEN YOU FINISH,
FORWARD THAT
FILE TO POSEIDON
SECURITY.

UNDER A
PSEUDONYM,
OF COURSE...

BUT DON'T
SEND
ANYTHING
ABOUT THE
SUB, YET.

YES'M

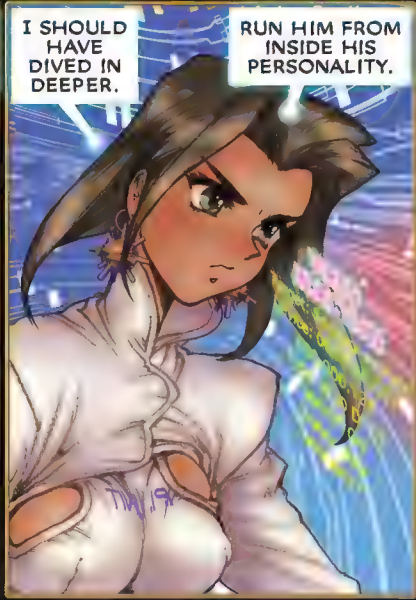


HEY!
WHAT'RE
YOU
DOIN',
MAN?



WHAT
THE... AW,
SHIT!!

ARGH...
NOT MY
LUCKY
DAY.



I SHOULD
HAVE
DIVED IN
DEEPER.

RUN HIM FROM
INSIDE HIS
PERSONALITY.





HEY, CAP'N,
SIR! WE GOT
INFILTRATED
BY ONE A'
THEM E-BRAIN
HACKERS.

I SLAMMED
HIM ONE
GOOD...
HEH HEH

AN E-BRAIN
HACKER...? IN THE
MIDDLE OF THE
OCEAN? YOU SURE
IT'S NOT JUST
HUDNALL GOOFING
WITH THE SECURITY
SYSTEMS AGAIN?

WAIT A
SEC...MAYBE
WE'VE BEEN
HARD WIRED!!

ACTIVE SONAR PING
AT MAX! GET US A
FIRING SOLUTION!

MIGHT
BE A
DIVER...

SO FAR,
SO GOOD...

!-?

NOT ACTIVATED
UNLESS YOU ARE

HOW THE
HELL
WERE WE
DETECTED?!

THIS IS VERY
STRANGE... NO
ORDINARY CORPORATE
CONGLOMERATE'S GOT
THAT ADVANCED A
DEFENSE CAPABILITY...

VOO-
OOO!

Uh-oh,
CAP'N...
SONAR
RETURN
LOOKS
WEIRD...

Normally Motoko wouldn't have to cover her ears to protect them from the active sonar ping, because she can block the sound through software. (On the other hand, it's always good to protect your eardrums.) She probably didn't want to lose her passive sonar link with the pirate sub, since re-linking might allow a hacker to infiltrate using sound.

BACKUP
POWER
COMING
ON LINE...
WHAT TH--?
HEY!!

CUT THE
DAMN LINK
CABLE!
NOW!!

NOT
THAT
ONE!!

OBSERVATION
TEAM! SCAN
THE WORDS
COMING FROM
INSIDE THE
TARGET SHIP
AND EVALUATE
THEIR
RESPONSE.

UM, IT'S A
TYPE D,
CURRENTLY
RANGING
IN STRESS
RANK
BETWEEN
12 AND 13.

LOTS OF
CONSTRUCTION
NOISE...
THEY'RE
LOUDER THAN
WE ARE!



DAMN IT!
WE'RE
SCREWED!

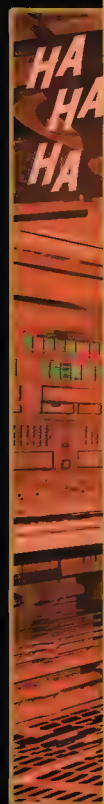
RAISE
THE COMM
ANTENNA.
MAKE AN
EMERGENCY
REPORT TO
SECURITY.

B-BUT...WHAT IF
LOCAL PATROLS
AND CONTROLS
ARE
INTENSIFIED...?

DON'T
WORRY.
IT'LL
WORK
OUT.

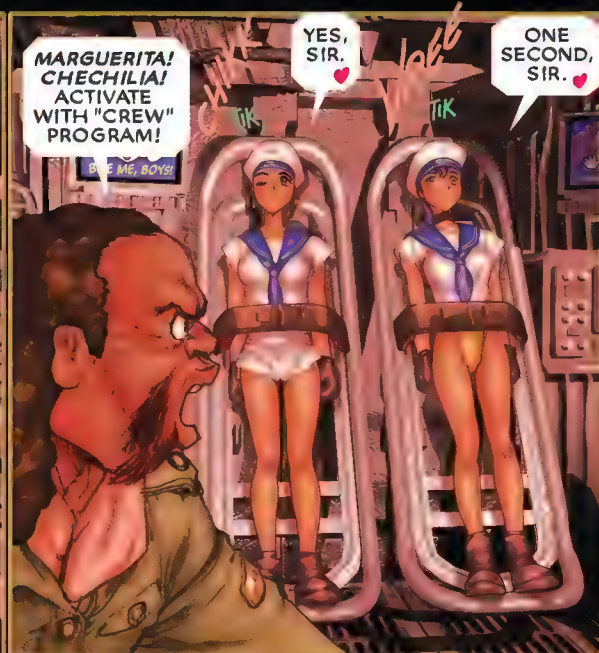
HEY?! WHO
THE HELL JUST
EVACUATED?!

WILL YOU
PLEASE
QUIT
RANDOM?





WELL, SHIT!
DUNNO
WHAT'S
GOING ON,
BUT DAMNED
IF I'M
GONNA SINK
WITHOUT
KICKING
SOME ASS!



MARGHERITA!
CHECHILIA!
ACTIVATE
WITH "CREW"
PROGRAM!

YES,
SIR.

ONE
SECOND,
SIR.



I WANT YOU TO
MANUALLY RELEASE
THE SAFETY ON EACH
TORPEDO TUBE!
THEN FIRE 'EM ALL
AROUND US!



PLEASE DEFINE
"ALL
AROUND
US."

DO YOU
WANT AUTO
SETTINGS...?

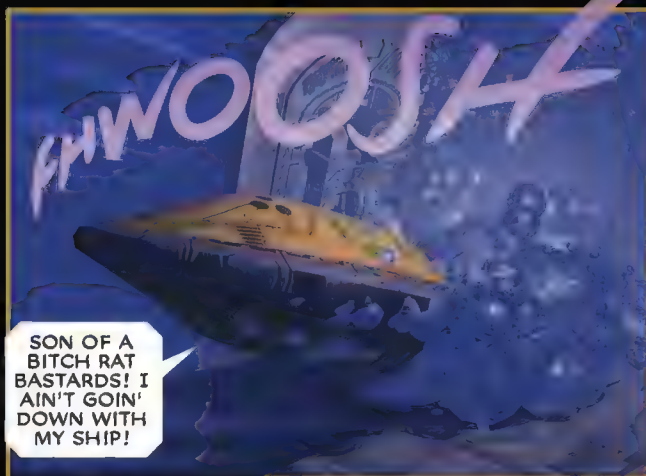


YES, BUT
DON'T
SHOOT THE
ESCAPE
PODS!
SWITCH ON
THE IFF!



Torpedoes are normally loaded automatically. Let's assume these hatches are normally used to remove torpedoes, not to load new ones. The sailorette with her hands on the hatch is doing a safety check. (Of course, these sailorettes are really stolen goods, probably designed to be on-board waitresses...or something.) It's a submarine, so no alarms are ringing even though the emergency lights are on.

For the record, this takes into account the possibility that the GPS mines might be duds.

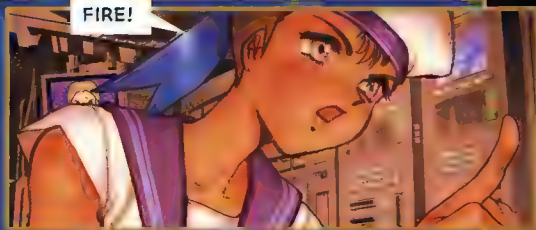


WE'VE DETECTED THE SOUND OF THE TARGET SHIP'S TORPEDO LAUNCH TUBES BEING FLOODED!

YOU GET OKAY NUMBERS FOR REFLECTED SHOCK? PUT TWO DECOYS ON STANDBY, JUST TO BE SURE.



FIRE!





Hmm...
YOU THINK
WE EJECTED
IN A BAD
PLACE?

HELP!
SOMEBODY
HELP!



OKAY, LET'S TAKE
THE SHORTEST
POSSIBLE COURSE
TO AREA 78,
BEFORE SECURITY
GETS HERE.

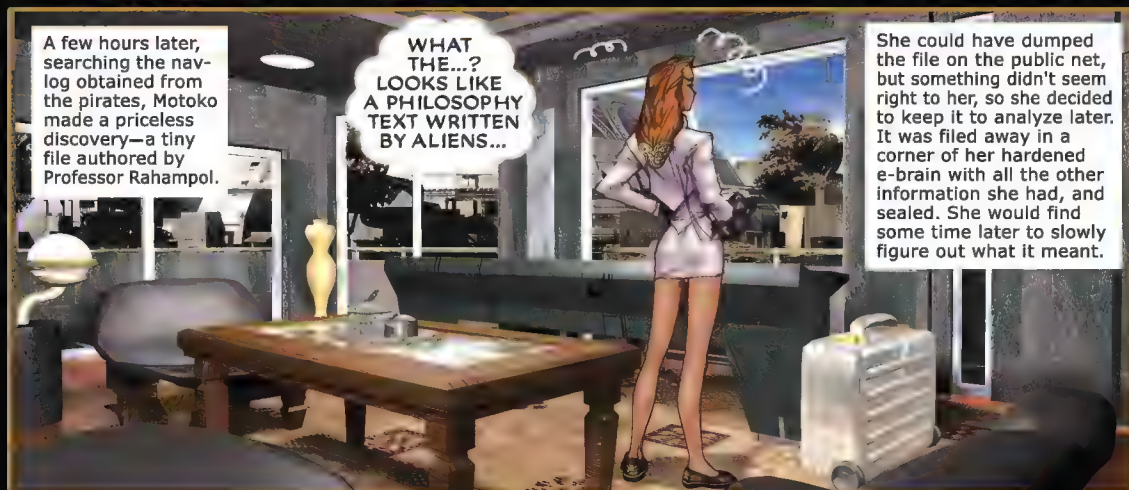
THREE ESCAPE PODS DAMAGED FROM SHOCK, DESTROYED
OR TAKING IN WATER. OUR SHIP'S HULL DISTORTION
WITHIN ALLOWABLE LIMITS: FURTHER DETAILS NEEDED?

GIVE US
THE ORDER
TO SAIL! WE
WANT THE
ORDER!!

SAIL!!

HEY! YOU
CAN'T GIVE
COMMANDS!

P.M.12:46 MOTOKO'S OFFICE



A few hours later,
searching the nav-log
obtained from
the pirates, Motoko
made a priceless
discovery—a tiny
file authored by
Professor Rahampol.

WHAT
THE...?
LOOKS LIKE
A PHILOSOPHY
TEXT WRITTEN
BY ALIENS...

She could have dumped
the file on the public net,
but something didn't seem
right to her, so she decided
to keep it to analyze later.
It was filed away in a
corner of her hardened
e-brain with all the other
information she had, and
sealed. She would find
some time later to slowly
figure out what it meant.

C I R C U I T W E A P O N

03



2035.03.06.AM08:12



I'M SENDING
IMAGES OF
THE COMPANY
FROM THE
PROBES. CAN
YOU SEE
THEM?

LOOKS
GOOD.
KEEP IT
UP.

DO NOT ENTER
CAUTION!!
ELECTRICITY
DANGER

INSIDE MEDITECH: A CORPORATE CLONE-ORGAN
FARM (PART OF THE POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL
GROUP) IN THE REPUBLIC OF EAST INDONAVIA.



Meditech customers deposit specific genes with the company and purchase rights to a pig. The genes are spliced into pig ova, which are then fertilized and the pigs raised. If, for some reason, the customer later needs to have a transplant, he or she can use organs from the pigs without risk of rejection by the human immune system. While some religious and animal rights groups have criticized this system, it is increasingly popular with society at large and represents a huge profit growth area for Poseidon.

I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T SAY THIS, BUT EVEN AT *THIS* DISTANCE I'M GETTING A WHIFF OF ROASTED PORK...

SHIT! IT'S THOSE BASTARDS FROM THE HUMAN LIBERATION FRONT...!

IT'S A MIRACLE WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY FATALITIES AMONG THE LOCAL STAFF.

NO, IT'S NOT A MIRACLE...

...IT'S BECAUSE ARAMAKI HERE DID SUCH A GOOD JOB FOR US.

BUT I THOUGHT WE'D REACHED A SETTLEMENT WITH THE HLF...?

CLEARLY IT WAS SCRAPPED!

WE'VE ALREADY STARTED OUR ANTI-HLF PR CAMPAIGN WITH MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING SHOWING CHILDREN WAITING FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTS.

GRR!

MAY THE LORD PUNISH THEM...

YOU SURE IT'S NOT SOME SORT OF SABOTAGE BY THE CLONE TEAM?

THAT THE ONLY THING YOU CAN THINK UP?

The technology exists to manufacture human organs without using donor pigs, but for safety reasons Poseldon Industrial has chosen to use genetic material taken from its customers while they're young and healthy, rather than growing organs from cells taken from them when they're older and sick. There's always the "programmed cellular death" problem (apoptosis), but we won't get into that here.



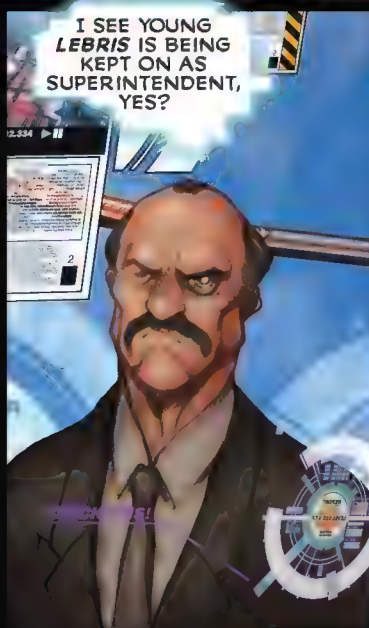
WE'LL ALLOW THE LOCAL POLICE ONTO THE SCENE IN APPROXIMATELY SIX HOURS. WE'LL DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH THE FACILITIES AT OUR NEXT MEETING.

ANYTHING WE SHOULD LOOK INTO BEFORE THEN?



WE'RE GOING TO SUBMIT, FOR YOUR RECONSIDERATION, OUR PROPOSAL TO MOVE MEDITECH TO AN AS-YET UNZONED SECTOR IN PEGASUS, THE FLOATING CITY CURRENTLY BEING BUILT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

I HAVE TO WARN YOU, THOUGH, THAT THE PLAN DIFFERS IN SEVERAL DETAILS FROM WHAT WE SUBMITTED PREVIOUSLY.

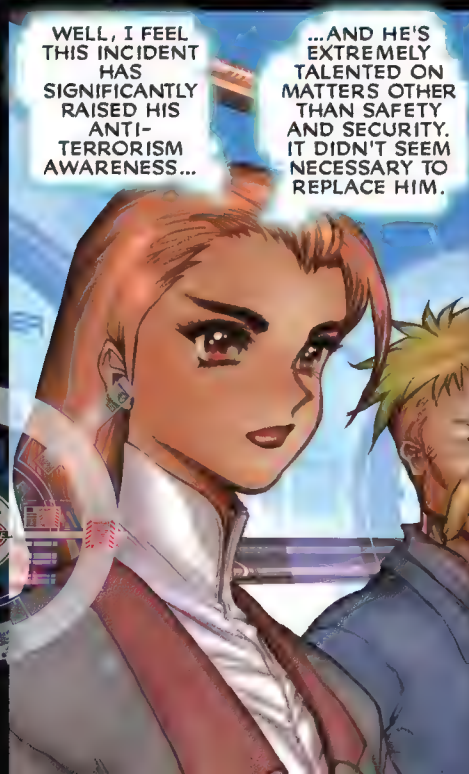


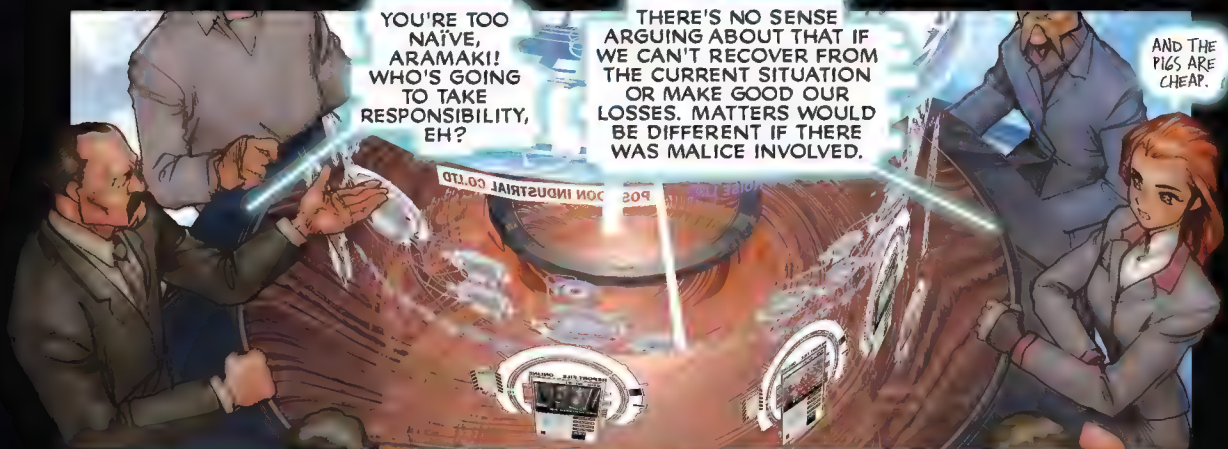
I SEE YOUNG LEBRIS IS BEING KEPT ON AS SUPERINTENDENT, YES?



WELL, I FEEL THIS INCIDENT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY RAISED HIS ANTI-TERRORISM AWARENESS...

...AND HE'S EXTREMELY TALENTED ON MATTERS OTHER THAN SAFETY AND SECURITY. IT DIDN'T SEEM NECESSARY TO REPLACE HIM.

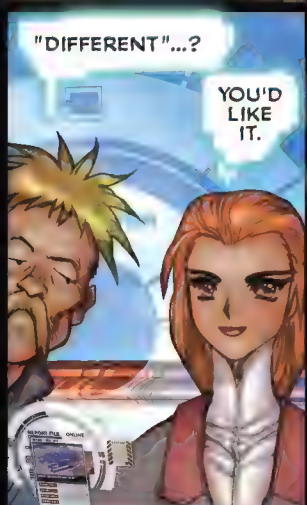




YOU'RE TOO NAÏVE, ARAMAKI! WHO'S GOING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY, EH?

THERE'S NO SENSE ARGUING ABOUT THAT IF WE CAN'T RECOVER FROM THE CURRENT SITUATION OR MAKE GOOD OUR LOSSES. MATTERS WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF THERE WAS MALICE INVOLVED.

AND THE PIGS ARE CHEAP.



"DIFFERENT"...?

YOU'D LIKE IT.

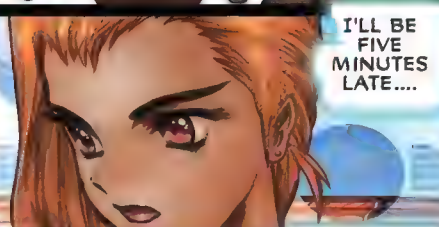


WELL, IF THERE ARE NO OTHER ITEMS...THE NEXT MEETING IS IN THIRTY MINUTES.

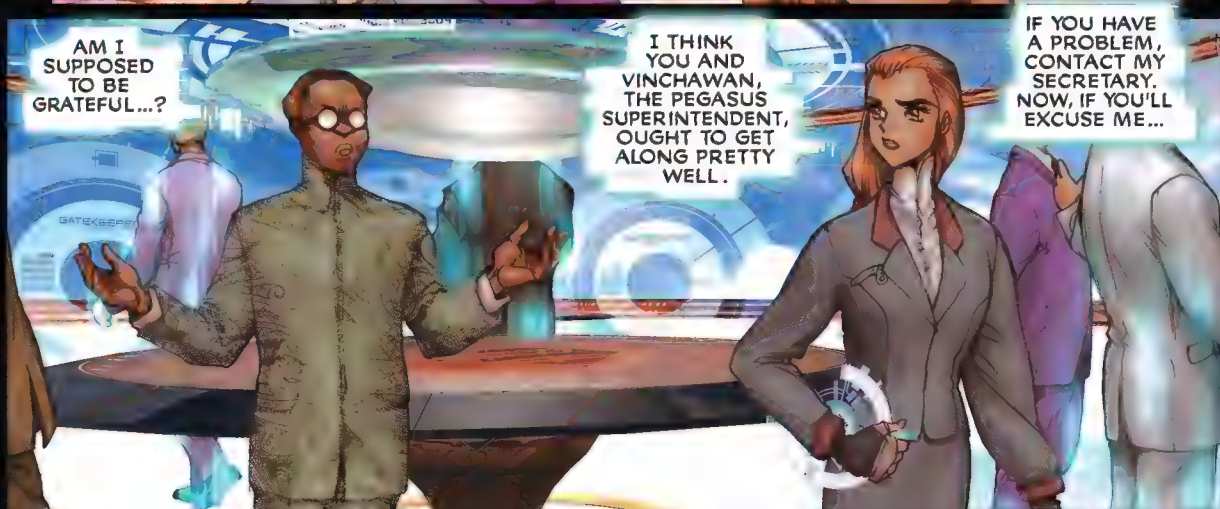
DISMISSED!



ARAMAKI, THE TEAM HANDLING THE REPUBLIC OF EASTERN MONNABIA'S WAITING FOR YOU.



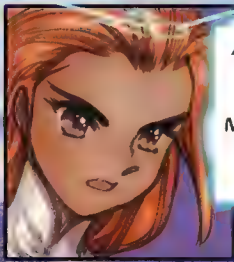
I'LL BE FIVE MINUTES LATE....



AM I SUPPOSED TO BE GRATEFUL...?

I THINK YOU AND VINCHAWAN, THE PEGASUS SUPERINTENDENT, OUGHT TO GET ALONG PRETTY WELL.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, CONTACT MY SECRETARY. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

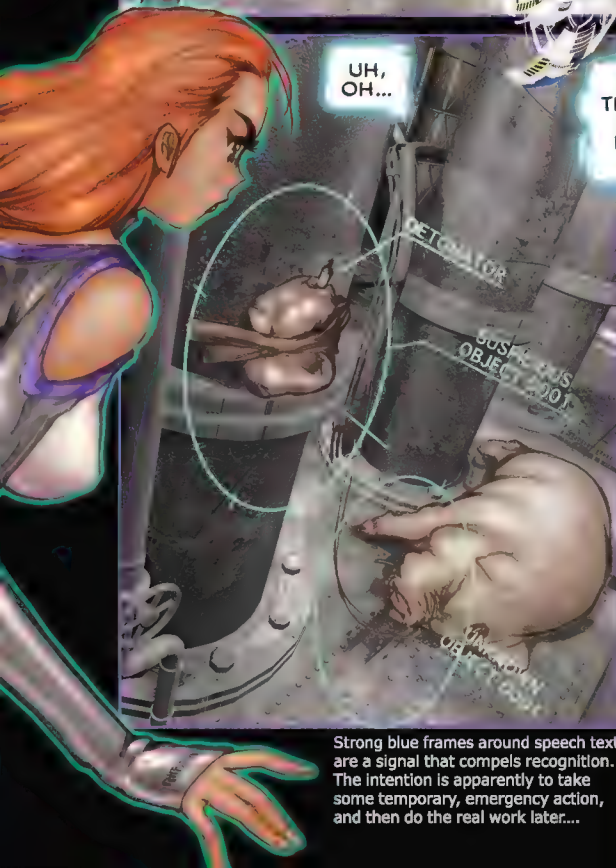


AIRSHIP! HAS
THAT PROBE
CEBOT WITH
THE CX
MANIPULATORS
ARRIVED AT
SECTOR 12-B
YET?

TWO
MINUTES
AGO.

IT'S IN AN
AREA WITH
LITTLE
DAMAGE
FROM
EXPLOSIVES.

MAKE
SURE TO
CHECK
THE MAIN
PILLARS
AND
AROUND
THE
TANKS.



UH,
OH...

LOOKS LIKE
THE PIG'S GOT
THE BOMB
FUSE IN HIS
MOUTH.

IT
CERTAINLY
LOOKS
THAT WAY.

TAG
THAT
TOP
SECRET,
OKAY?



Strong blue frames around speech text are a signal that compels recognition. The intention is apparently to take some temporary, emergency action, and then do the real work later....

IF ANY OF THE ANALYTICAL EQUIPMENT IN THE LAB SURVIVED, WE CAN USE IT TO CHECK THE CARCASSES. IF NOT, WE'LL HAVE TO REMOVE WHAT'S LEFT OF IT ANYWAY...

CRUDE. "ACQUIRED" FROM THE LOCAL MILITARY...?

WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, CAN YOU GET A SAMPLE FROM THE PIG'S BRAIN?

THE CEBOTS WE'VE GOT ON SITE WON'T BE ABLE TO CUT OPEN THE SKULL.

WE MIGHT NOT LUCK OUT, BUT WHY NOT JUST SEARCH FOR A PIG WITH AN EXPOSED BRAIN...?

YES, GOOD IDEA.

I ERASED THE INFORMATION WHEN WE EVACUATED, BUT I INTEND TO PULVERIZE EVERYTHING WITH SATELLITE BOMBING BEFORE THE LOCAL POLICE ARRIVE AND START LOOTING.

I'LL DOWNLOAD YOU THE BOMBING SCHEDULE SO YOU CAN GET OUT SAFELY.

AREN'T YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE WASTE PROCESSING YARD CONTAMINATING THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT?

CHECK OUT PAGE ECO-0187 OF THE ASSESSMENT DONE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION PLANS. IT'S WITHIN LIMITS.

THAT'S IT, THEN.

ROGER.

LOOKS LIKE THE BASTARDS FROM THE HLF DIDN'T EVEN TOUCH THE LITTLE DEVICE WE PLANTED FOR THEM.

SO THE GOAL OF THE ATTACK WAS PURE DESTRUCTION, NOT LOOTING.



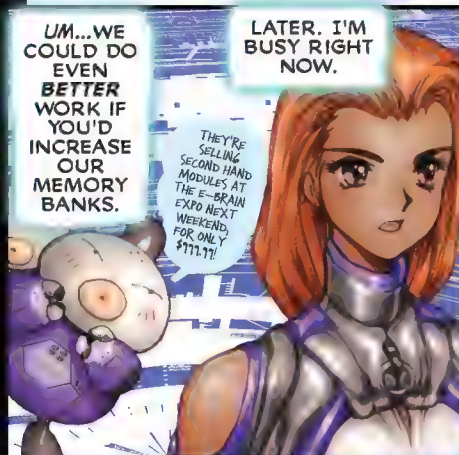
MA'AM? FROM SURVEILLANCE CAM IMAGES WE RETRIEVED, WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY SOMEONE WHO APPEARS TO BE THE LEADER.

GOOD WORK, BOYS!

UM...WE COULD DO EVEN BETTER WORK IF YOU'D INCREASE OUR MEMORY BANKS.

LATER. I'M BUSY RIGHT NOW.

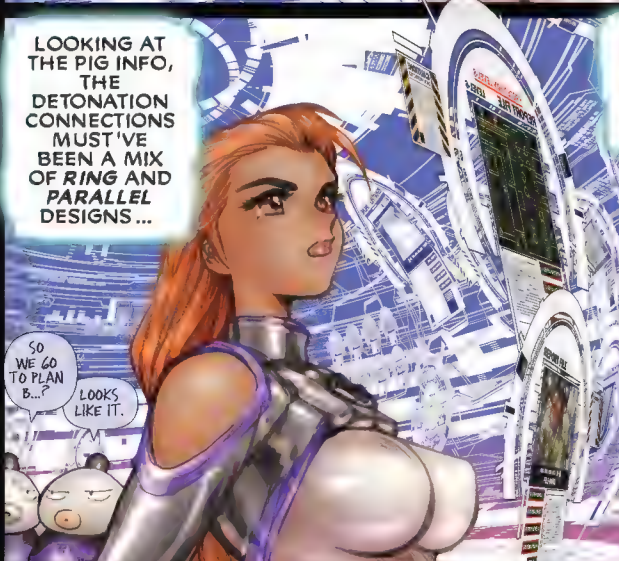
THEY'RE SELLING SECOND HAND MODULES AT THE E-BRAIN EXPO NEXT WEEKEND, FOR ONLY \$111.11!

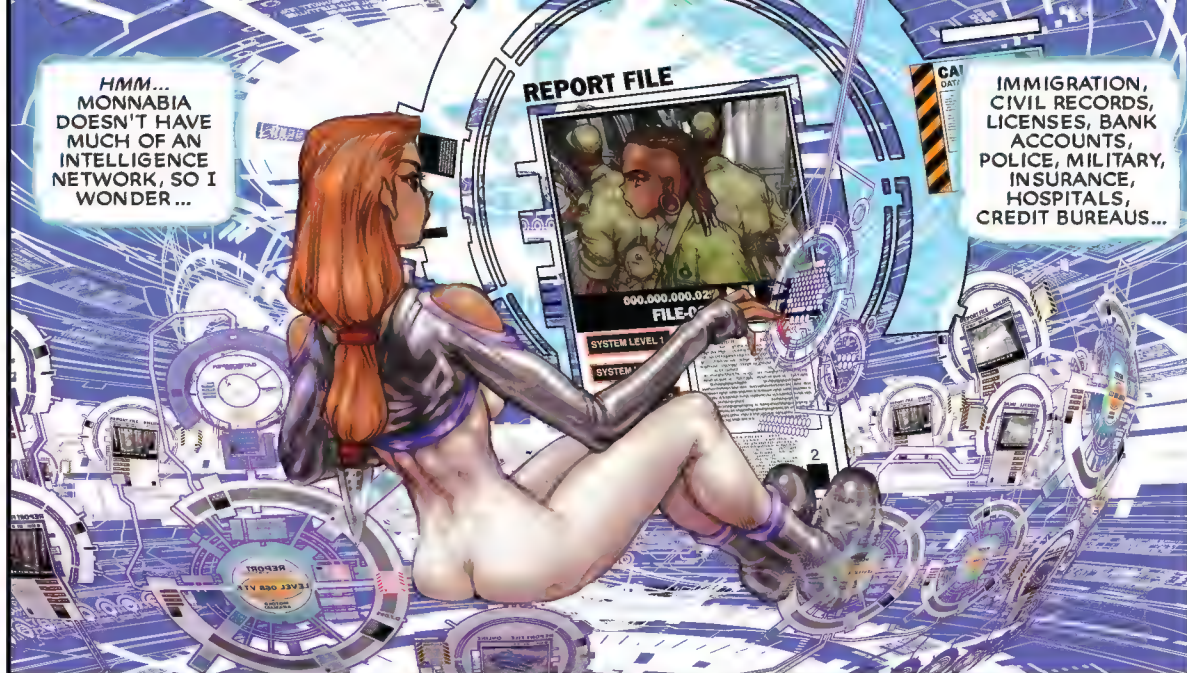


LOOKING AT THE PIG INFO, THE DETONATION CONNECTIONS MUST'VE BEEN A MIX OF RING AND PARALLEL DESIGNS ...

SO THIS IS THE LEADER ...SHE'S SPOTTED THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERA...
HMM!

NO ATTEMPT AT IMAGE MANIPULATION. SO SHE KNOWS WHAT WE'RE DOING AND IS TRYING TO LEAD US ON.





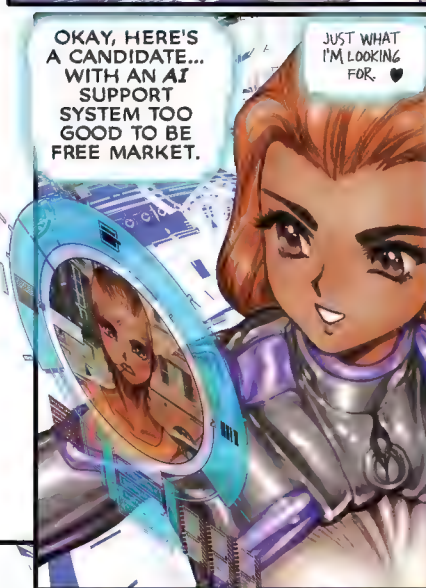
HMM...
MONNABIA
DOESN'T HAVE
MUCH OF AN
INTELLIGENCE
NETWORK, SO I
WONDER ...

REPORT FILE



CAI
DATA

IMMIGRATION,
CIVIL RECORDS,
LICENSES, BANK
ACCOUNTS,
POLICE, MILITARY,
INSURANCE,
HOSPITALS,
CREDIT BUREAUS...



OKAY, HERE'S
A CANDIDATE...
WITH AN AI
SUPPORT
SYSTEM TOO
GOOD TO BE
FREE MARKET.

JUST WHAT
I'M LOOKING
FOR. ♥



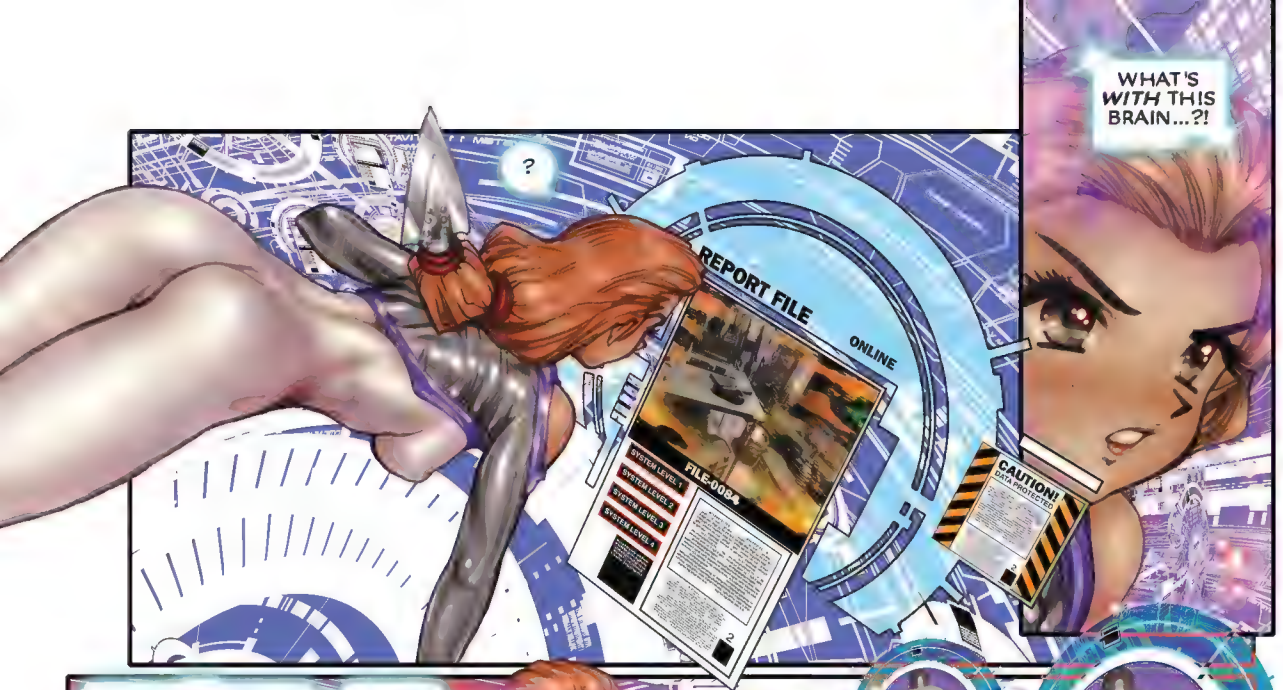
OKAY, WE'LL
START WITH
HER
INITIALIZATION
SETTINGS AT
THE E-BRAIN
CO-OP.

STAND BY
WITH FOUR
DECOYS, PLUS
C42 ANTI-
PROBE AND
C41 ANTI-
INTERCEPT
DEVICES.

LOCKING
IN VPN
TUNNEL
ON SAT-12.



WONDER IF
WE'LL GET A
CONNECTION...



IBOGAINE: Name of psychedelic substance derived from the roots of the iboga plant from Central West Africa. Not particularly effective in e-brain wars, but maybe just easy for these folks to obtain locally.



GOT A
RESPONSE
FROM
SCANNING
SAT-7.
SWITCHING TO
ROUTE C.

CONFIRMING
TARGET
COORDINATES...

GETTING
SCAN
RESPONSE
FROM
ROUTE C,
SAT-12!!

PRETTY FAST
FOR AUTO!
PLUG IN A
MAZE ON
ROUTE C, SAT-6
TO GAIN TIME.



CAN'T BELIEVE
THERE'S NO
RESTRAINING
MECHANISM!

ALL BARRIERS
PENETRATED...
INJECTING
VIRUS INTO
CORE
PROCESSES...

COPYING
PERIPHERAL
MEMORY TO
DECAY 4...



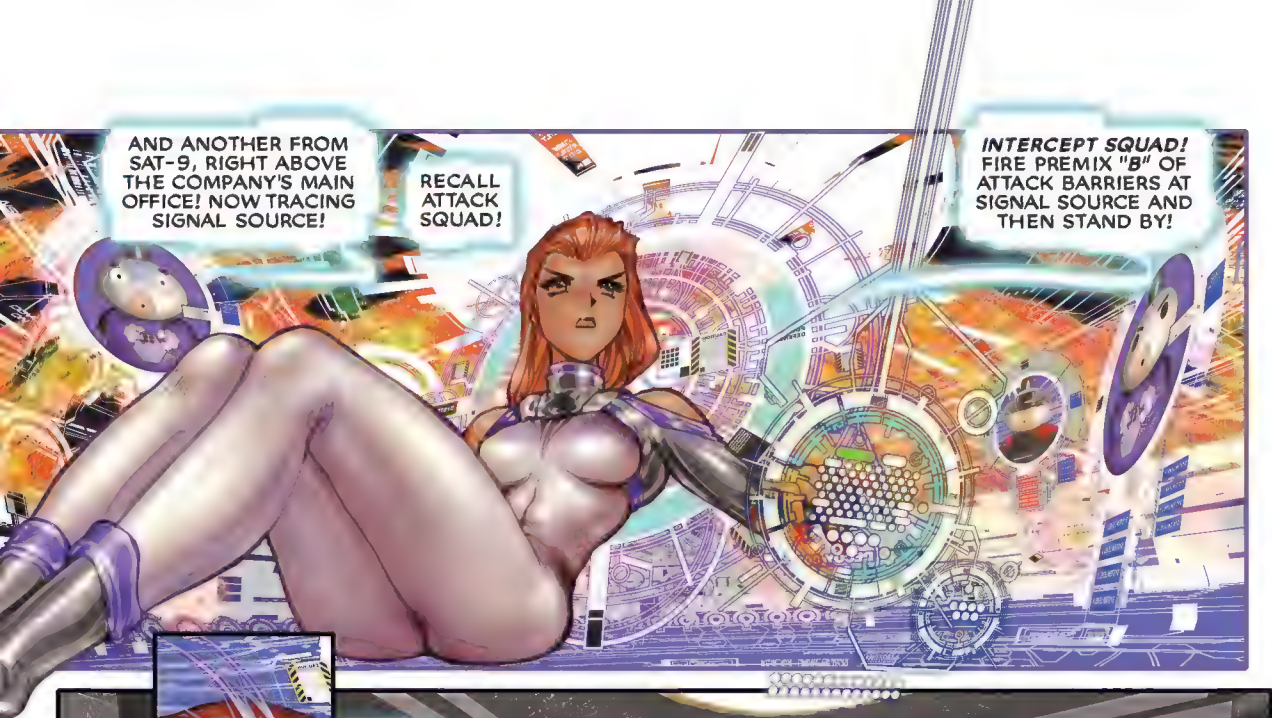
OKAY--
PULL ALL
CONNECTION
TRACES OUT
OF ENEMY
HARDWARE!

CONFIRMING
INCREASE IN
DRUGS
INJECTED...
yow!

HOW COULD
THEY DO A
REVERSE
PROBE UNDER
THESE
CONDITIONS?!

WONDER IF WE
COULD USE THE
ORGANIZATION'S
DIRECTORY AND
JUMP TO
SOMEONE
ELSE'S BRAIN...?

WE HAVE
A SCAN
RESPONSE
FROM
ROUTE C,
SAT-8...



AND ANOTHER FROM SAT-9, RIGHT ABOVE THE COMPANY'S MAIN OFFICE! NOW TRACING SIGNAL SOURCE!

RECALL ATTACK SQUAD!

INTERCEPT SQUAD! FIRE PREMIX "B" OF ATTACK BARRIERS AT SIGNAL SOURCE AND THEN STAND BY!



⇒ PHEW ←

ATTACK BARRIERS NOW NEUTRALIZED UP TO BLOCK 2. IF IT REACHES BLOCK 4, WE PLAN TO RECALL THEM.



HOW FAR HAS THE ENEMY SCANNED?

FROM POSEIDON F TO THE J SECTOR RELAY.

THEY APPEAR TO HAVE UNLEASHED A 40-MEGA CLASS VIRUS.

A CONTAMINATION ALERT HAS BEEN ISSUED. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE SAMPLE...?

SECURITY'S SEARCHING FOR THE SOURCE OF THE CONTAMINATION ALERT SIGNAL.

There really aren't any "data disks" like these floating in physical space. To Motoko's eyes (e-brain), it just "looks" like they are. Also, the reason her mouth isn't moving is because the conversations are all taking place at the e-brain level. In terms of timing, the enemy intervened with the satellite above the company's headquarters too soon (they should have intervened when the girl was convulsing under the neurotoxic effect of the hyperdose of ibogaine), but that's because Motoko's neural drug strategy was more effective than they expected.

REPORT FILE

SEND MAIL TO ANDREW IN ENGLAND.

TELL HIM WE MAY HAVE FOUND THE HLF'S WEAPONS DEPOT, AND ATTACH THIS IMAGE FILE WITH COORDINATES.

WE'LL NEED AN INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS DONE ON THE VIRUS SAMPLE.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE MISTRESS'S NEURAL DRUG SIDE BUSINESS HAS BEEN USEFUL IN COMBAT, ISN'T IT...?

SVR FILE

SO... THE GIRL APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A DECOY. AH, AND THERE'S AN OVERLAP IN HER MEMORY...!

IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE AT SOME POINT IN TIME INTER-LEAVED MILITARY EXPERIENCE AND INTELLIGENCE DATA INTO HER MEMORY AND THEN HOOKED HER UP WITH THE HLF. OR MAYBE SHE HAD ELEMENTS OF IT FROM THE BEGINNING...

ENEMY HAS ENTERED MAZE 68, FOLLOWING THE LINE'S USAGE LOG.

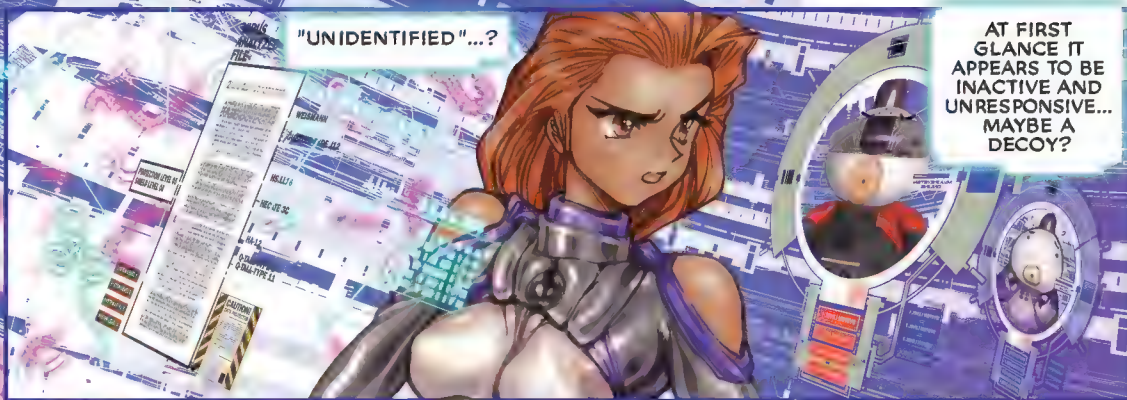
BLOCK 3 OF ATTACK BARRIER HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED.

NOT EXACTLY TIMID, ARE THEY...?

WHAT'S THE STATUS ON THE VIRUS ANALYSIS?!

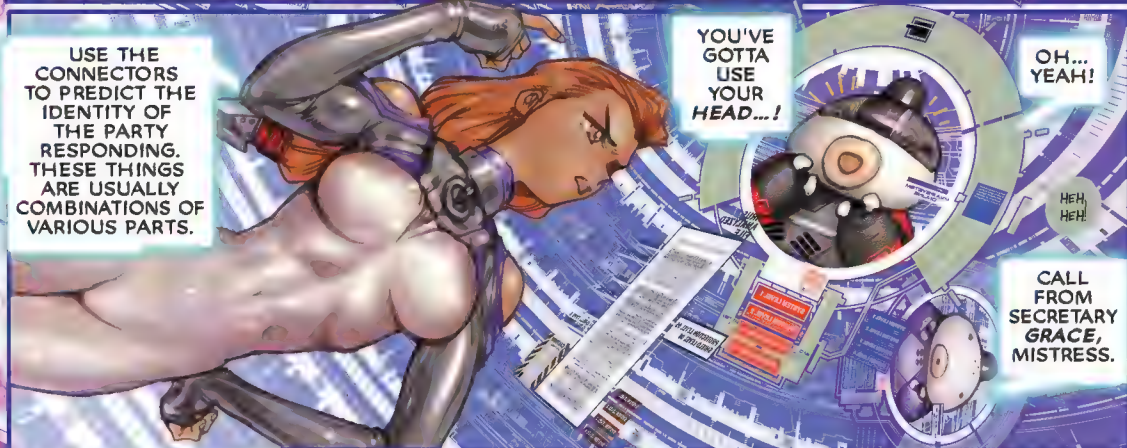
CURRENTLY THEY'RE GOING AFTER EACH OTHER. FOURTEEN TYPES NEUTRALIZED, TWO IN EVOLUTION, ONE UNIDENTIFIED.

The commander's past-memory file looks like a family picture album because for every memory unit written into her hard e-brain there's also a title and a preview file available for quick scanning.



"UNIDENTIFIED"...?

AT FIRST
GLANCE IT
APPEARS TO BE
INACTIVE AND
UNRESPONSIVE...
MAYBE A
DECOY?

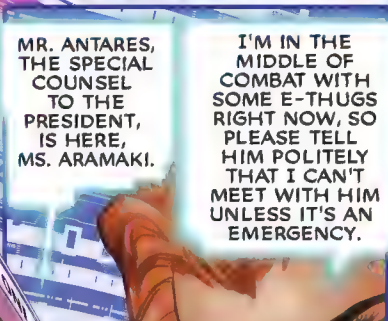


USE THE
CONNECTORS
TO PREDICT THE
IDENTITY OF
THE PARTY
RESPONDING.
THESE THINGS
ARE USUALLY
COMBINATIONS OF
VARIOUS PARTS.

YOU'VE
GOTTA
USE
YOUR
HEAD...!

OH...
YEAH!

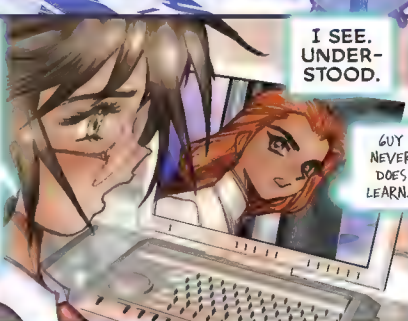
CALL
FROM
SECRETARY
GRACE,
MISTRESS.



MR. ANTARES,
THE SPECIAL
COUNSEL
TO THE
PRESIDENT,
IS HERE,
MS. ARAMAKI.

I'M IN THE
MIDDLE OF
COMBAT WITH
SOME E-THUGS
RIGHT NOW, SO
PLEASE TELL
HIM POLITELY
THAT I CAN'T
MEET WITH HIM
UNLESS IT'S AN
EMERGENCY.

ALSO, WE'VE
RECEIVED A
COMPLAINT
FROM MR.
LEBRIS, ON
PAPER MEDIA.
IT'S NEARLY A
QUARTER-INCH
THICK, BUT
WE'RE
DIGITIZING IT
RIGHT NOW.



I SEE.
UNDER-
STOOD.

AND, UM...
MOTOKO...?

GUY
NEVER
DOES
LEARN...

KCCH



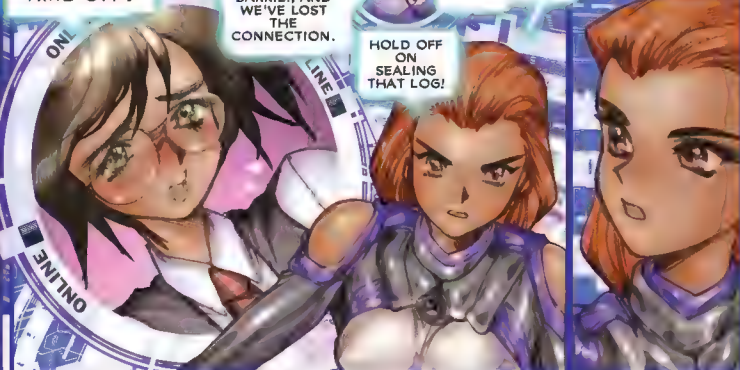
I HATE TO
ASK YOU
THIS NOW,
BUT...CAN I
TAKE SOME
TIME OFF?

WHAT...?

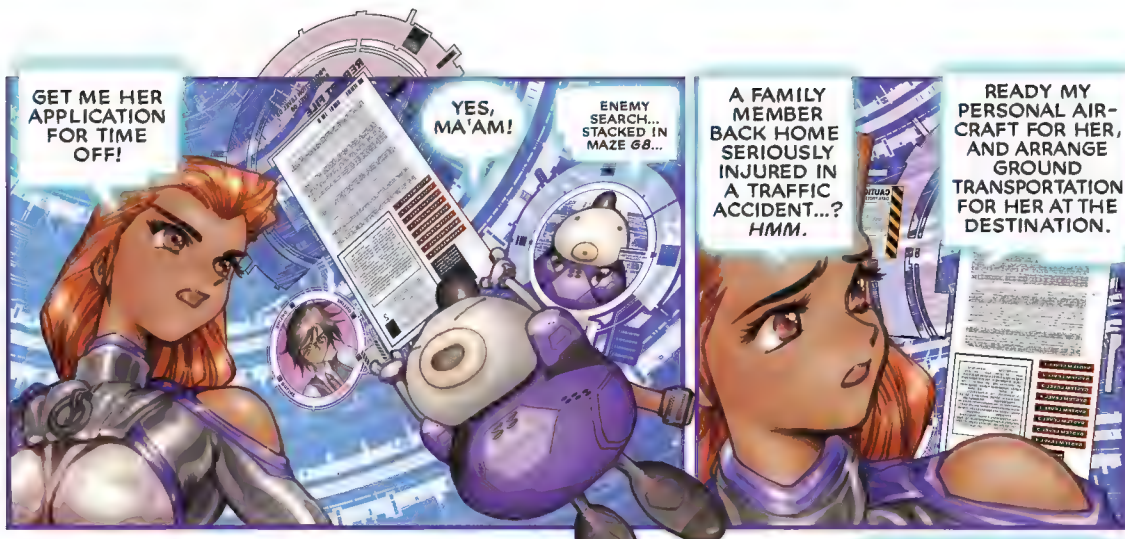
WE HAVE A
HIT SIGN ON
THE BLOCK 4
OF THE
BARRIER AND
WE'VE LOST
THE
CONNECTION.

TIME OFF,
GRACE?
SURE, BUT
I'M
SURPRISED.

HOLD OFF
ON
SEALING
THAT LOG!



The image of Grace the secretary indicates she's "online," but she's really not, technically. She's just connected via a desktop computer to the independent terminals in Motoko's subordinates; they indirectly see the images and transmit them to Motoko's brain via their own e-brains.



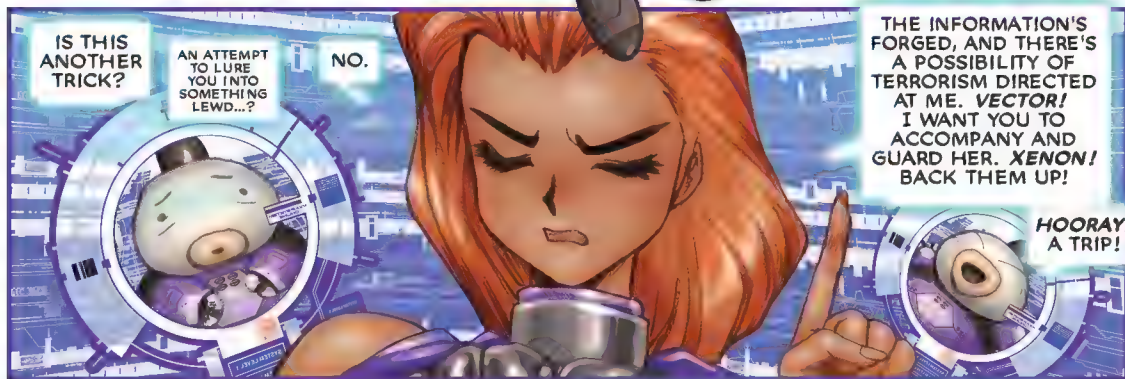
GET ME HER APPLICATION FOR TIME OFF!

YES, MA'AM!

ENEMY SEARCH... STACKED IN MAZE 68...

A FAMILY MEMBER BACK HOME SERIOUSLY INJURED IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT...? HMM.

READY MY PERSONAL AIR-CRAFT FOR HER, AND ARRANGE GROUND TRANSPORTATION FOR HER AT THE DESTINATION.



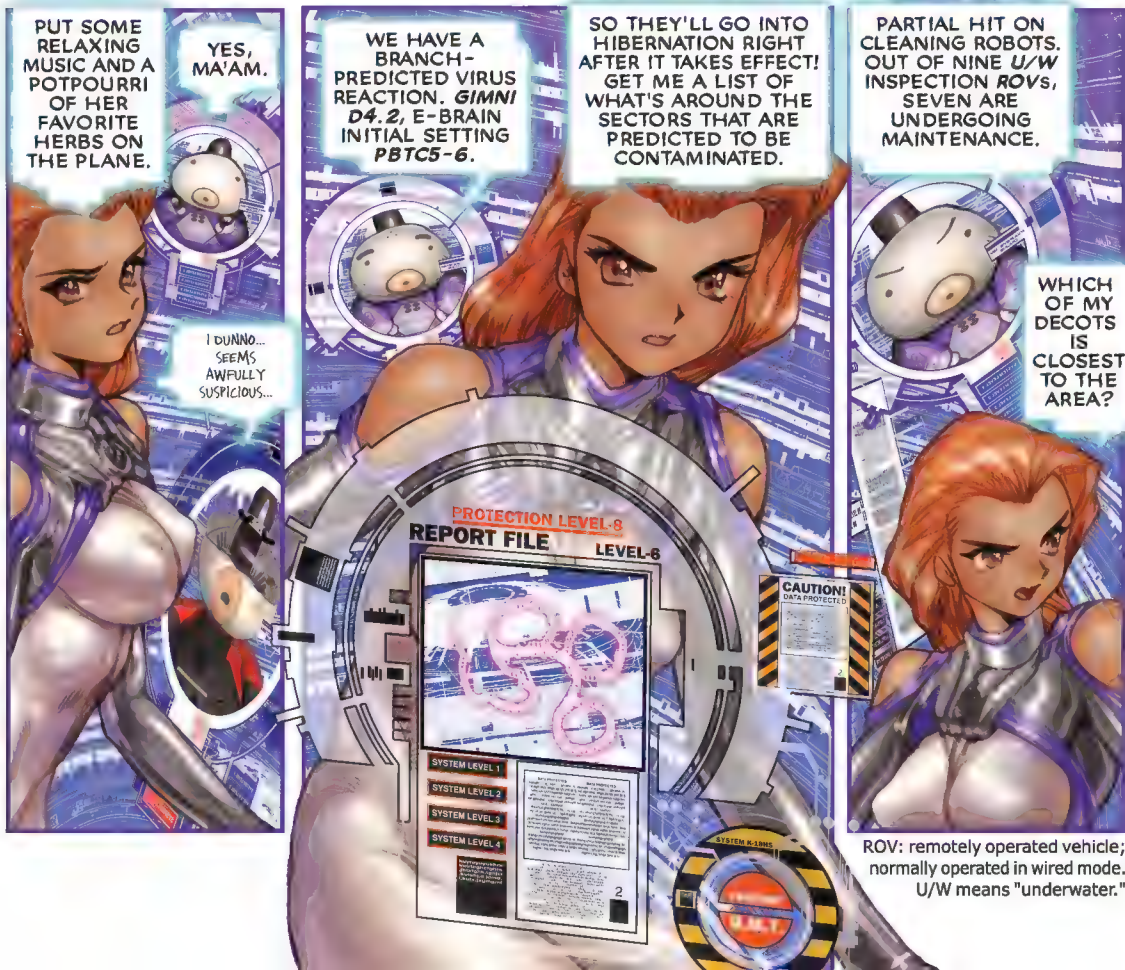
IS THIS ANOTHER TRICK?

AN ATTEMPT TO LURE YOU INTO SOMETHING LEWD...?

NO.

THE INFORMATION'S FORGED, AND THERE'S A POSSIBILITY OF TERRORISM DIRECTED AT ME. **VECTOR!** I WANT YOU TO ACCOMPANY AND GUARD HER. **XENON!** BACK THEM UP!

HOORAY! A TRIP!



PUT SOME RELAXING MUSIC AND A POTPOURRI OF HER FAVORITE HERBS ON THE PLANE.

YES, MA'AM.

WE HAVE A BRANCH-PREDICTED VIRUS REACTION. **GIMNI D4.2**, E-BRAIN INITIAL SETTING **PBTC5-6**.

SO THEY'LL GO INTO HIBERNATION RIGHT AFTER IT TAKES EFFECT! GET ME A LIST OF WHAT'S AROUND THE SECTORS THAT ARE PREDICTED TO BE CONTAMINATED.

PARTIAL HIT ON CLEANING ROBOTS. OUT OF NINE **U/W** INSPECTION ROVS, SEVEN ARE UNDERGOING MAINTENANCE.

WHICH OF MY DECOTS IS CLOSEST TO THE AREA?

PROTECTION LEVEL-8
REPORT FILE LEVEL-6

SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4

CAUTION!
DATA PROTECTED

ROV: remotely operated vehicle; normally operated in wired mode. U/W means "underwater."



REPORT
E-DAMAGE TO
SECURITY, AND
MAKE SURE
WE'VE GOT ONE
OF THOSE ROVS
NAILED.

YES,
MA'AM!

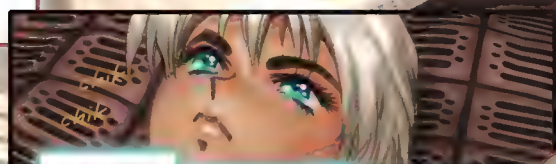
DECOT
CLARICE M
ACTIVATED
WITH
SYSTEM B...

ALL
SUB-SPECIES
FROM BLOCK
4 DEPLOYED
ON DEFENSE
LINE...!

SET UP A STEALTH
COMBO VIRUS IN
BLOCK 6--ONE THAT
USES ANY FOUR
ANTIBODIES FROM
BLOCKS 1 TO 4.

THEN
ESTABLISH
A DEFENSE
LINE
THERE.

??...EVEN
THOUGH
WE'VE GOT
A HIT ON
BLOCK 4?



DON'T BE
SO NAÏVE!
THINGS
CHANGED!

SHOULD WE
COLLECT THE
ONES WE'VE
ALREADY
DEPLOYED...?

NO, NO! JUST
CONTINUE
PRETENDING
YOU'VE BEEN
TRICKED...!



FDD

MAIL BACK FROM ANDREW IN ENGLAND, CHECKED AND CLEARED.

THREE TRACE BUOYS ELIMINATED.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO LEAVE THE INSPECTION ROV WITH THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT?

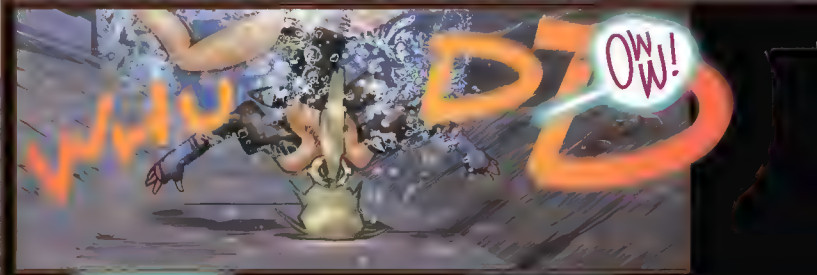
HAS A HARD TIME BEING HONEST ABOUT THE JOY HE FEELS, DOESN'T HE...?

ACTIVATE ALL C-CLASS MAZES IN CENTRAL INFORMATION CONTROL AGENCY!

SET SEQUENTIAL F-4 MAZES ON ALL TERMINALS WITHIN TWENTY METERS OF THE INSPECTION ROVs!

A REAL EMERGENCY, EH?

"Stealth Combo" virus: When an opponent uses antibodies to neutralize an attack barrier, they can be treated as components, combined, and then activated as a virus. Used alone they're harmless, and normally very tiny, with reproduction held to a minimum. As a result, it may be more accurate to describe them as *prions*—program fragments with "virus-like" traits.



Clarice is a decot, so compared to Motoko's body (which is made of titanium and carbon nanotube materials), Clarice's is extremely lightweight...but nonetheless considerably heavier than a human's, so she's not very well-suited for swimming. Motoko regrets not having had her land spread-eagled, so the water resistance would have slowed her down better.

Decots don't really breathe. There are bubbles coming out of Clarice's mouth because there was some air left in her body and it's leaking out.

ER...YOUR CLOTHES ARE CREATING TOO MUCH RESISTANCE. FOR MAXIMUM UNDERWATER SPEED, YOU OUGHT TO GET RID OF THEM.

YOU WISH.

THE EASIEST THING IS JUST TO FOLLOW THE PIPE.

IGNORING THE Y AXIS, OF COURSE, IT'S FASTER TO MOVE ON LAND.

HOW MANY MINUTES UNTIL I CATCH UP?

THIS IS TAKING ME TO THE BIO-ZONE.

APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MINUTES IN A STRAIGHT LINE. BUT SINCE WE DON'T KNOW WHAT SORT OF COURSE THE TARGET HAS SELECTED, I'M ADDING A TWO-MINUTE BUFFER.

I'M LINKING WITH THE PHYSICAL MAP OF THE COM-CABLE NETWORK. GO AHEAD AND ISSUE AN INFO EVAC ORDER FOR THE BIO-ZONE.

HMM...THE INFO BARRIERS ARE REALLY HARDENED, SO I WONDER IF THEY'RE PLANNING TO PHYSICALLY JUMP OVER...?

DO THEY THINK THE SYSTEM'S THAT FRAGILE INTERNALLY? I DOUBT IT... THEY MOVE LIKE THEY'VE CHECKED THINGS OUT PRETTY WELL BEFORE COMING HERE.





WE'RE AT
THE LINE
ENTERING
THE
JUNCTION...

I'M
GOING
IN.

I'M SENDING
MY SENSORY
SIGNALS, SO
COME UP WITH
SOME WAY TO
TRACK THEM.



YOU WANT A
REFLECTIVE
CALCULATION?
IT'LL BURN
BETTER...!

KCHINK

LOOKS LIKE
THEY'RE
CONNECTING
DIRECTLY TO
THE CABLE...

SUPERIN-
TENDENT
LEBRIS!



AH...? ER...
IF YOU HAVE
A PROBLEM,
YOU'LL JUST
HAVE TO
CONTACT MY
SECRETARY--

SEPARATE
BUSINESS!
THERE'S AN ACT
OF **INFOTERROR**
BEING CARRIED
OUT RIGHT
BELOW YOUR
FACILITY. JUST
WANTED TO LET
YOU KNOW.



UH
OH...YOU
JUST
WASTED
THREE
STROKES...

DAMN...
THIS
THING *IS*
GETTING
IN THE
WAY...

Of course, there's no need for a "remotely controlled humanoid terminal" to wear underwear, but let's just say Motoko's doing it out of habit.



GOT A
CONTROL
REPORT ON THE
ROV YET?

JUST
GETTING A
REGULAR
CONTROL
PANEL..

DOING REVERSE
PROBE FOR THE LINE
THAT ACCESSES THE
CONTROL PANEL...
THREE RELAYS AND
THREE SATELLITES
IDENTIFIED SO FAR...

OKAY.
JUST
STAND BY
AS IS.

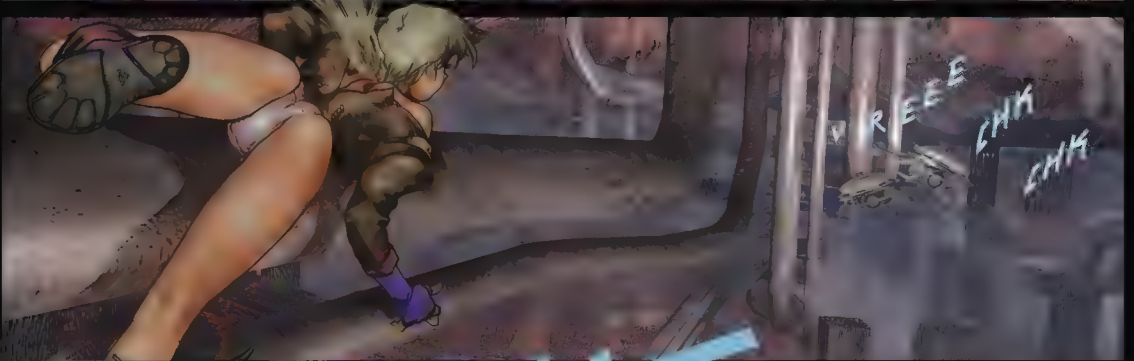
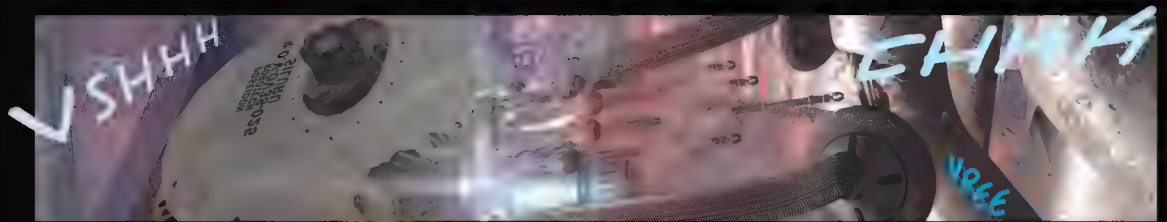
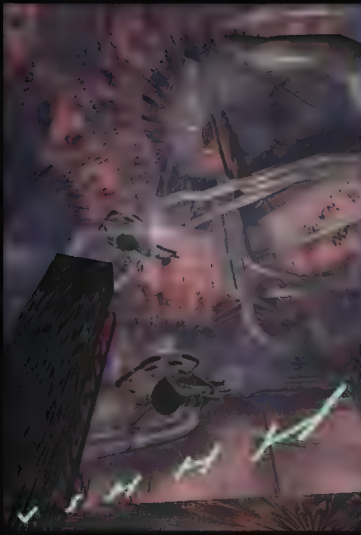
LOOKS LIKE
THEY'RE NOT
JUST USING
VIRUSES. I'M
SENDING YOU A
LIVE REPORT.

ARMED SECURITY DIVISION SUBMARINE GUARD SHIPS **SLVS-03** AND **04** HAVE
COMMENCED PLYES. ESTIMATED TIME TO CLARICE'S COORDINATES, BETWEEN 6-14
MINUTES AND 1-25 MINUTES. NOW ELECTRONICALLY INJECTING STEALTH VIRUSES,
AS YEAH U/ WORK ROVs. TEN SECONDS TO OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS.

TARGETS ARE
DECELERATING.

THIS IS THE SAME AREA
WHERE WE SANK THE
PIRATES THIS MORNING,
MISTRESS. AND THERE'S
BEEN A REPORT ON A CRACK
IN A DATA PIPE HERE.

I DON'T
LIKE THE
SOUND
OF
THIS...



WE CAN ONLY GET A RELIABLE TRACE TO THE SATELLITE WE RELAY THROUGH. THAT'S FACTORING IN ERRORS IN AREAS WHERE RECEPTION'S POSSIBLE.

THAT INCLUDES THE BORDER REGIONS OF GAVEL AND MONNABIA.

MAYBE IT'S UNDER HERE... WONDER IF THERE'S A RELAY...?

DECRYPT COPIES OF THE "PANDORA 9" AND "TRASH BOX BOMB" VIRUSES.

I WANT YOU TO YANK THE HEADERS, SHRED THE PAYLOAD, AND MIX THEM INTO THE DAMAGED ROV REPORT!

HARDWARE'S SIMILAR, SO IT SHOULD BE HARD TO DETECT ANY TIME DIFFERENCE.

IF THE READ-IN ERROR REPORTS ARE MERGED, WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO GET A GREAT HIT RATIO 'CAUSE THEY'LL BE ACTIVATED NO MATTER WHAT.

OF COURSE IF IT ACTUALLY WORKS, WE'LL REALLY BE LUCKY.

IF IT DOESN'T WORK WE SHOULD HAVE A HIT REPORT THAT'S NORMALLY NOT GENERATED COME BACK WITH THE TRICK BUILT IN.

IF THERE'S NOTHING, THAT'S IT. WE'LL JUST TEST THE VIRUSES, AND SECURITY WILL RETRIEVE THE ROV.

ER... LOOKS LIKE THE VIRUSES RELEASED BY THE ROVS HIT.

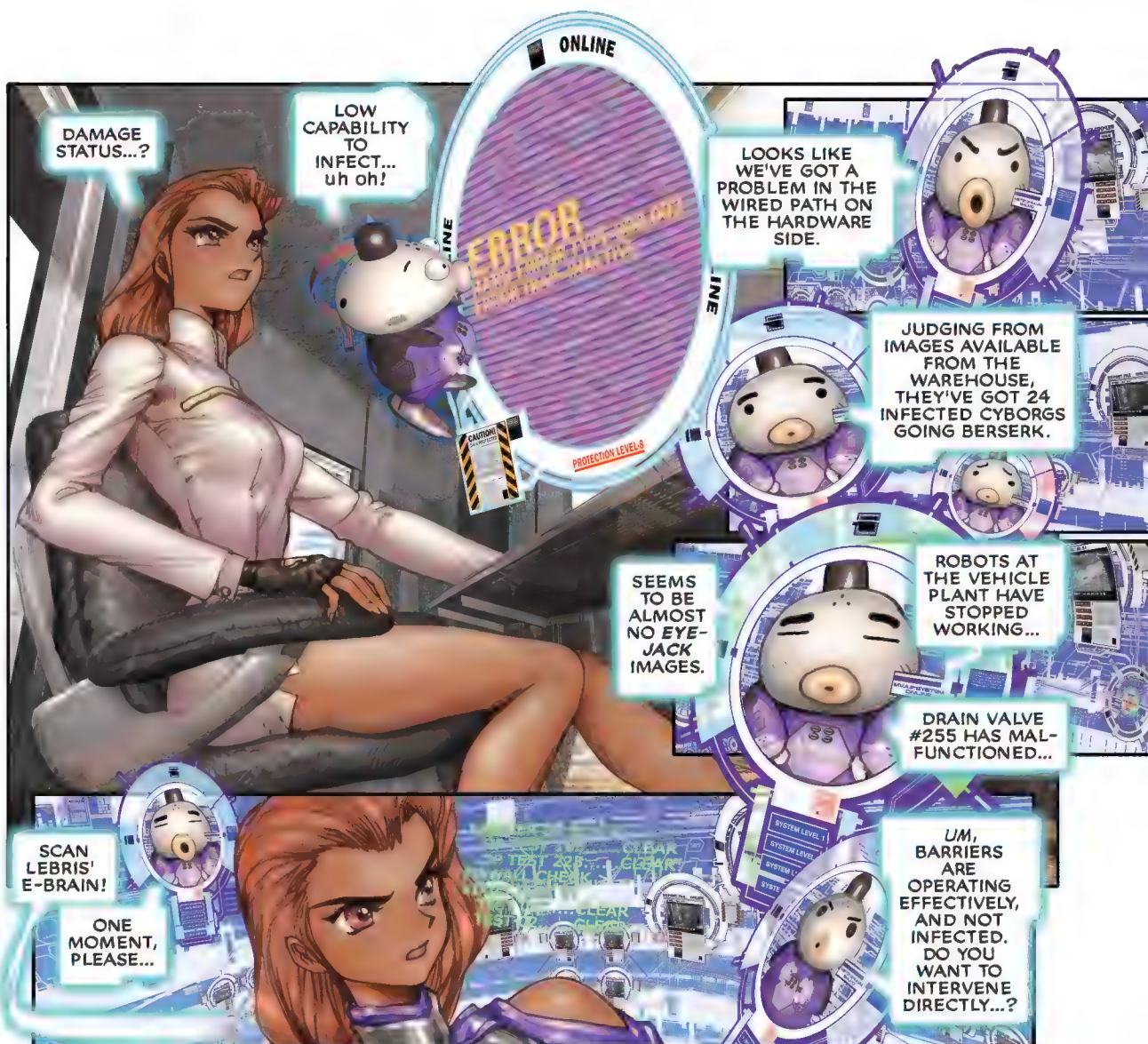
WHAT?!

THEY HADN'T EVACUATED ALREADY...?!
LEBRIS!!

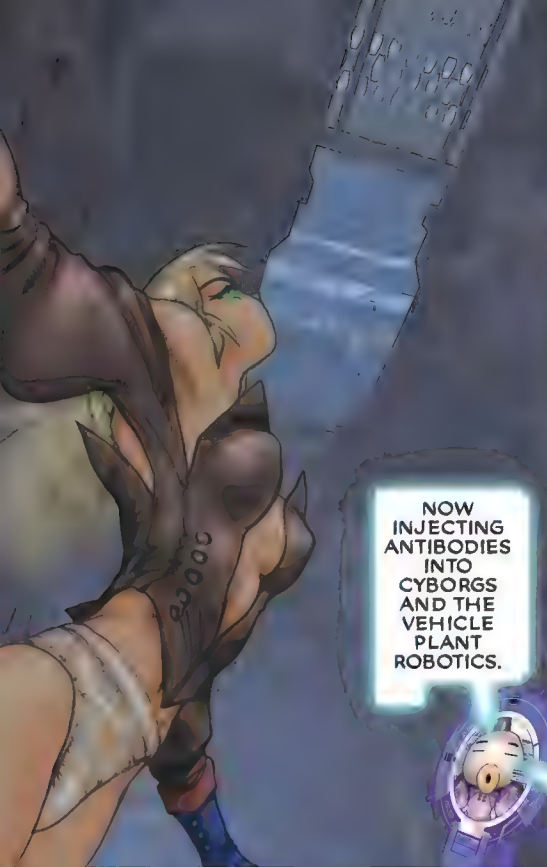
FIRE HIM!
FIRE HIM!

VIRUSES:
"TRASH BOX BOMB"
"PANDORA 9"
AND "DAMAGED ROV"
ALL RELEASED
UNEXPECTEDLY

PROCESS COMPLETED
ALL VIRUSES
DELETED
NEW 05 125



EYE-JACK: This refers to a system of hijacking the vision system of 100 randomly selected Poseidon e-brain workers and collecting information. In the case of workers that had e-brain operations done in Poseidon, "back door" access for Motoko has already been built into their initial settings and hardware. This is something Motoko incorporated at the design stage (it's one of her jobs). It's a low-cost, low-risk solution compared to doing a brand-new e-brain 'jack. It's covered under the e-brain ethics law and illegal, of course, but the chances of Motoko being discovered are nearly zero.



NOW
INJECTING
ANTIBODIES
INTO
CYBORGS
AND THE
VEHICLE
PLANT
ROBOTICS.



CLARICE
CONFIRMED
DETECTED BY
MONITORING
NETWORK.

WE HAVE A
FUNCTIONAL
FAILURE IN
CLARICE'S LEFT
EAR. ABILITY
TO CORRECT IS
DECREASING.

WATER
LEAK?

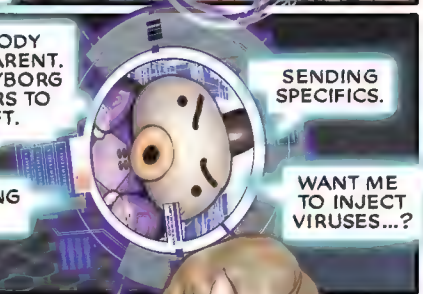


NO
PROBLEM
IN INNER
EAR.

THEN CLOSE
OFF THE
OUTER EAR.

NO ANTIBODY
EFFECT APPARENT.
CLOSEST CYBORG
TEN METERS TO
THE LEFT.

INVESTIGATING
CAUSE.



SENDING
SPECIFICS.

WANT ME
TO INJECT
VIRUSES...?



NO. LEAVE
IT UP TO
SECURITY.

OH, DAMN...
HE ALREADY
SAW ME...



I ESTIMATE
SECURITY FORCES
WILL ARRIVE AT
CLARICE'S
COORDINATES IN
258 SECONDS...
PLUS OR
MINUS 20.

MAYBE
TIME
FOR A
VIRUS?

HEY, WE'RE
DEALING WITH
PROSTHETIC
BODIES MADE
BY OUR OWN
COMPANY! WHAT
IF YOU INJECT
A VIRUS AND IT
CAUSES LONG-
TERM DAMAGE?

HEH
HEH...JUST
THOUGHT IT
MIGHT WORK
WELL...

APPLY MASKING
TO ANY SATELLITES
ABOVE US WITH VISION
CAPABILITY. CHECK
EXTERNAL ACCESS
TO MONITORING
CAMERAS!



THON

KRAH

FUDO

KANG

ONLINE

ONLINE

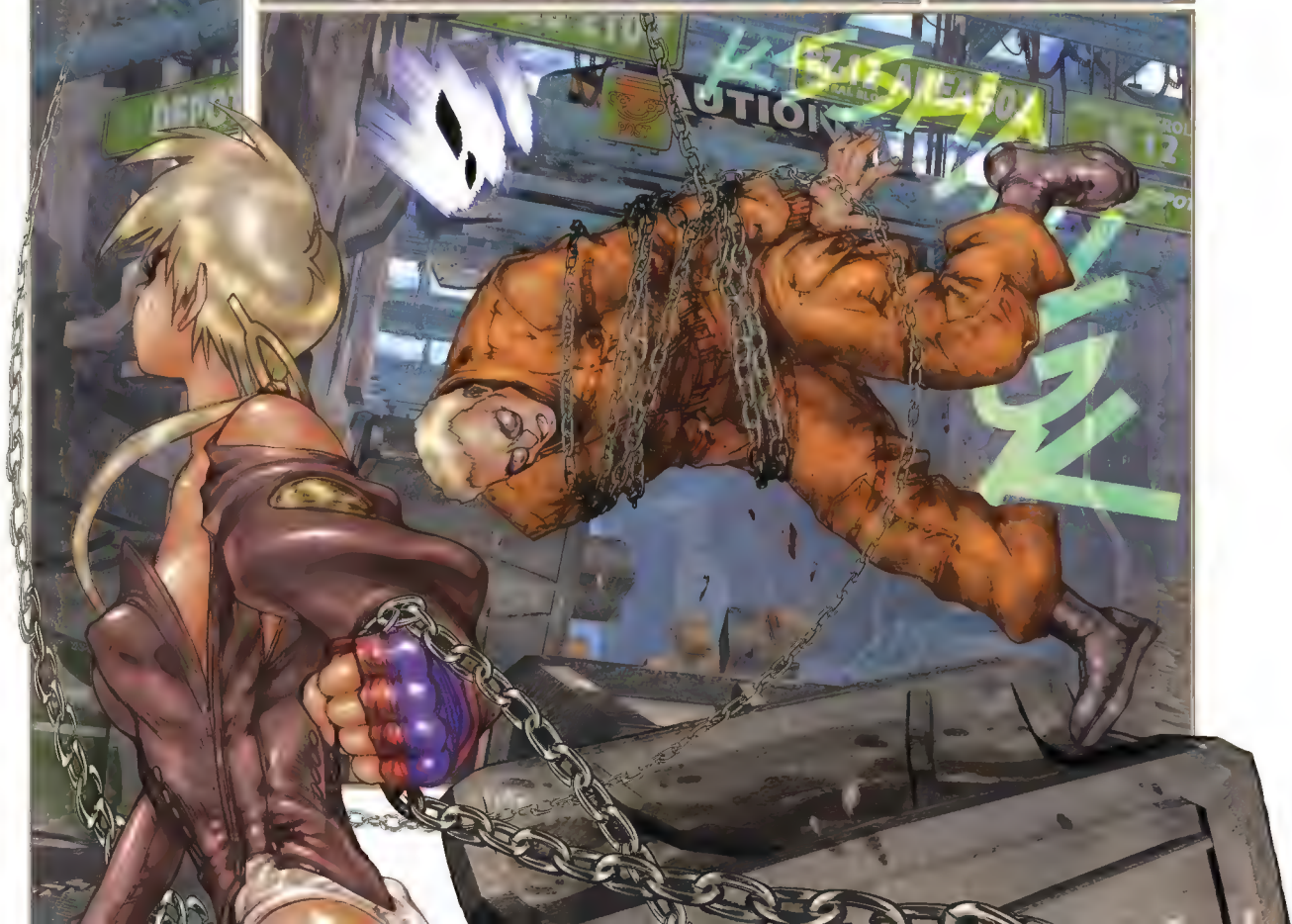
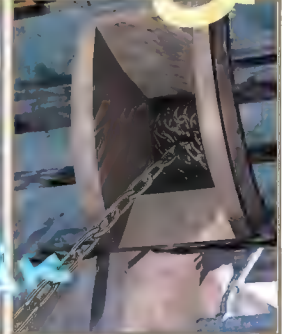
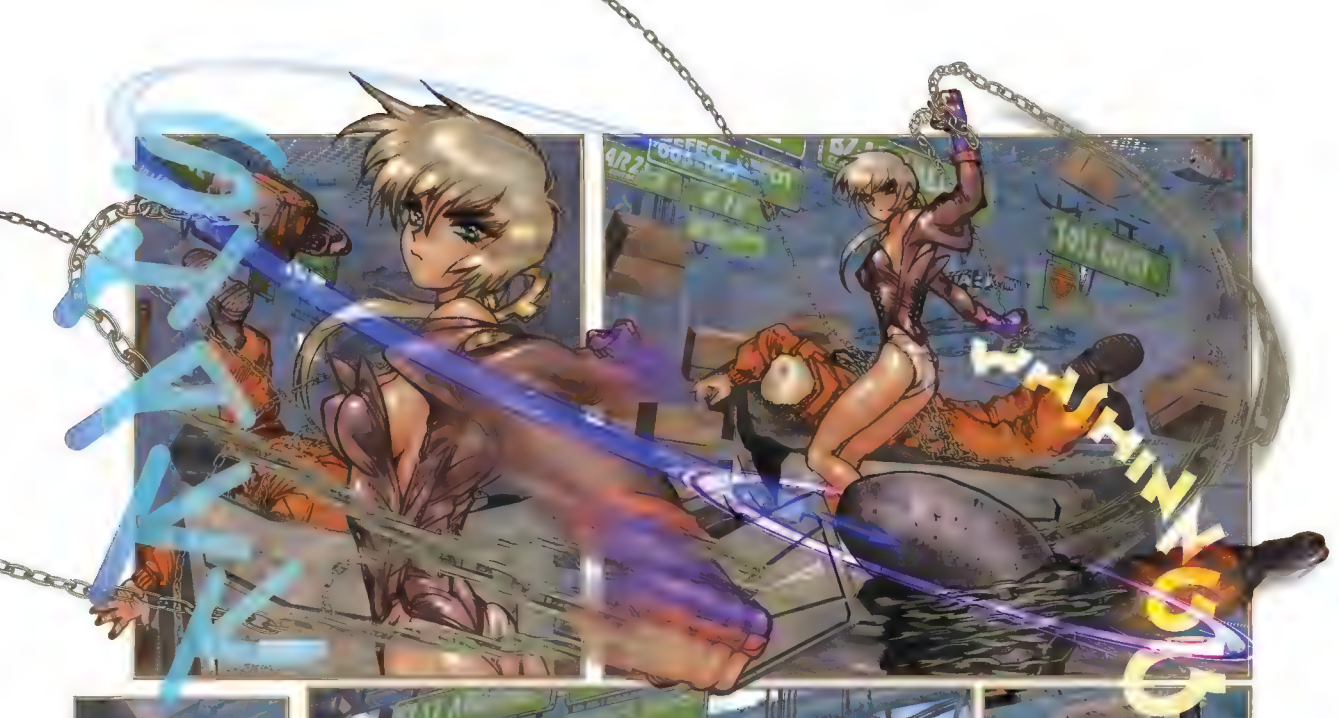
CAUTION

TYPE BOLLARD
ACTING DEVICE FOR
WHEEL LEVEL 05.C
NOT A BOLLARD











I WANT AN ANALYSIS DONE ON THAT CHAIN! ESTIMATE FATIGUE AND CURRENT TENSILE STRENGTH!

YES'M!

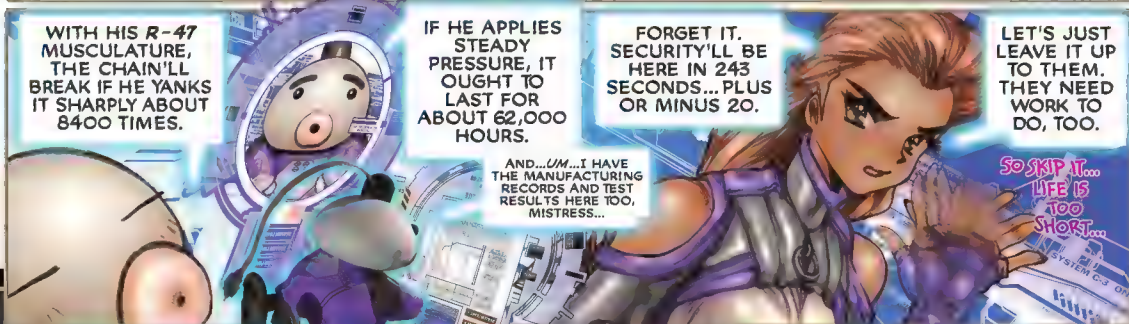
SHOULDN'T YOU HAVE CHECKED BEFORE USING IT...?

STOP BABBLING! JUST DO THE ANALYSIS!

SKREEEK

CHANK

WASHH



WITH HIS R-47 MUSCULATURE, THE CHAIN'LL BREAK IF HE YANKS IT SHARPLY ABOUT 8400 TIMES.

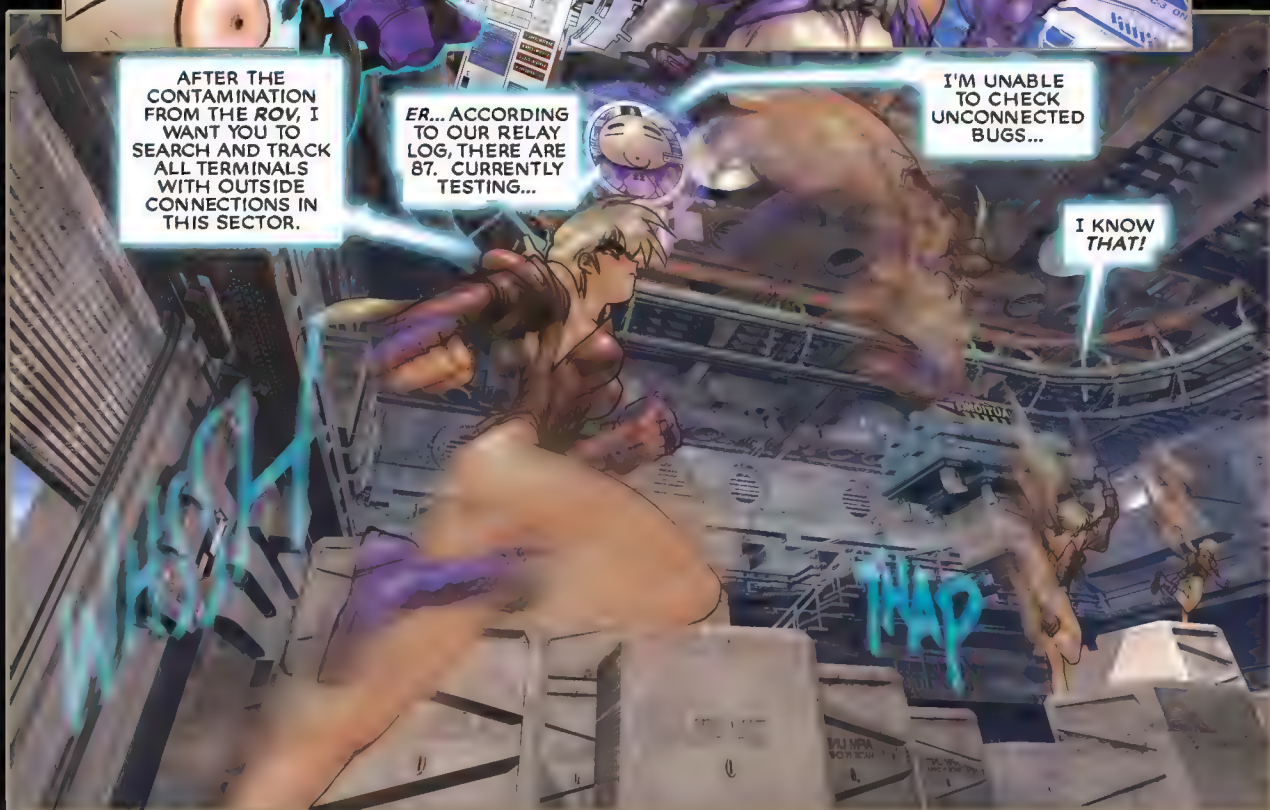
IF HE APPLIES STEADY PRESSURE, IT OUGHT TO LAST FOR ABOUT 62,000 HOURS.

FORGET IT. SECURITY'LL BE HERE IN 243 SECONDS... PLUS OR MINUS 20.

LET'S JUST LEAVE IT UP TO THEM. THEY NEED WORK TO DO, TOO.

AND... UM... I HAVE THE MANUFACTURING RECORDS AND TEST RESULTS HERE TOO, MISTRESS...

SO SKIP IT... LIFE IS TOO SHORT...



AFTER THE CONTAMINATION FROM THE ROV, I WANT YOU TO SEARCH AND TRACK ALL TERMINALS WITH OUTSIDE CONNECTIONS IN THIS SECTOR.

ER... ACCORDING TO OUR RELAY LOG, THERE ARE 87. CURRENTLY TESTING...

I'M UNABLE TO CHECK UNCONNECTED BUGS...

I KNOW THAT!

WASHH

THAP

A screenshot from the game 'The Matrix Online' showing a character named 'JACKIE' in a virtual office environment. The character is a blonde woman with purple gloves and boots, appearing to be in a dynamic pose. A blue question mark icon is positioned above her head, with a blue beam of light pointing towards her. A green circular highlight is on the floor near her feet. The office environment includes a desk with a computer monitor, a keyboard, and various office supplies. A large window in the background shows a cityscape. The overall aesthetic is a blend of realistic and stylized digital elements.

ONLY A JACKET...?

WHAT? YOU NEED A THREE-PIECE SUIT?

ONLY A JACKET...?

WHAT? YOU NEED A THREE-PIECE SUIT?

DANTE,
YOU JUST
GOT
DEMOTED
TO
CLEAN-UP
CREW!

B-BUT...
WHY?

MAYBE 'CAUSE
HER SKIN LACKS
PROTECTIVE
COVERING?

NAW, SHE JUST
WANTS TO TRY
WEARING
PANTS...

DANTE,
YOU JUST
GOT
DEMOTED
TO
CLEAN-UP
CREW!

B-BUT...
WHY?

MAYBE 'CAUSE
HER SKIN LACKS
PROTECTIVE
COVERING?

NAW, SHE JUST
WANTS TO TRY
WEARING
PANTS...

DANTE,
YOU JUST
GOT
DEMOTED
TO
CLEAN-UP
CREW!

B-BUT...
WHY?

MAYBE 'CAUSE
HER SKIN LACKS
PROTECTIVE
COVERING?

NAW, SHE JUST
WANTS TO TRY
WEARING
PANTS...

DANTE,
YOU JUST
GOT
DEMOTED
TO
CLEAN-UP
CREW!

B-BUT...
WHY?

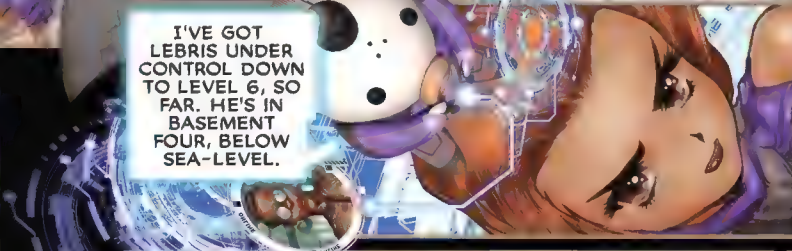
MAYBE 'CAUSE
HER SKIN LACKS
PROTECTIVE
COVERING?

NAW, SHE JUST
WANTS TO TRY
WEARING
PANTS...



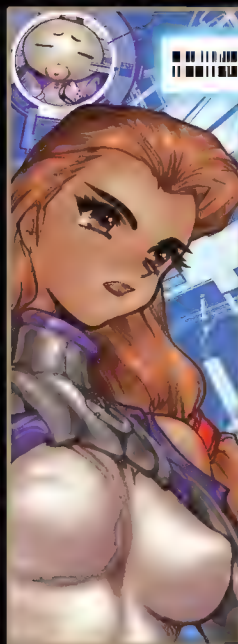
HANNIBAL!
INFILTRATE
LEBRIS AND SET
HIS CLARICE
RECOGNITION
MASKING TO
DEGREE 8...!

ACTIVATING
NO. 2 MASK
ARRAY.



I'VE GOT
LEBRIS UNDER
CONTROL DOWN
TO LEVEL 6, SO
FAR. HE'S IN
BASEMENT
FOUR, BELOW
SEA-LEVEL.

DON'T USE THE
E-BRAIN CORE--
JUST MAKE IT
LOOK LIKE HE'S
CHECKING THE
SYSTEM, AND
STAND BY WITH
EIGHT DECOYS.





KSSH

NO GO.
LOOKS
LIKE THE
ENEMY'S
ALREADY
USING
LEBRIS AS
A PAWN,
OR ELSE
HE'S A
VICTIM OF
THE FIRST
ATTACK...



PROBABLY
THE LATTER
BUT AT LEAST
WE CAN TRY
AGAIN.

CLEAN ROOM
ACTIVE 000.002.045



STAND BY
TO INJECT
LEBRIS WITH
THE ROV
VIRUS.

CLEAN ROOM
ACTIVE 000.000.004



CAN I
RELEASE THE
BARRIERS,
ETCETERA...?

GO
AHEAD.

SYSTEM LEVEL 1
SYSTEM LEVEL 2
SYSTEM LEVEL 3
SYSTEM LEVEL 4



GET ME A
PROGRESS
REPORT
ON THE
DAMAGE!

WE STILL HAVE NINE
CYBORGS IN THE WARE-
HOUSE AND THE VEHICLE
PLANT TO TAKE CARE OF.
THERE'S ALSO TWO NEW
ONES CONTAMINATED
IN ZONE C7242.

KEEP UP THE
MONITORING.

NO CHANGE IN ENEMY
PROBES IN 68 MAZE
STACK. WE ESTIMATE
AN AI LEVEL OF 3A,
EQUIVALENT TO A
HUMAN WITH EXTREMELY
POOR PROBLEM-
SOLVING SKILLS.

CONTINUE
MONITORING FOR
13 HOURS AFTER
WE BOTTLE UP
THE HARDWARE.

AFTER COLLECTING
THE VIRUS TRAPS,
MAG-KILL 'EM AND
THEN DISPOSE.

GOTCHA.

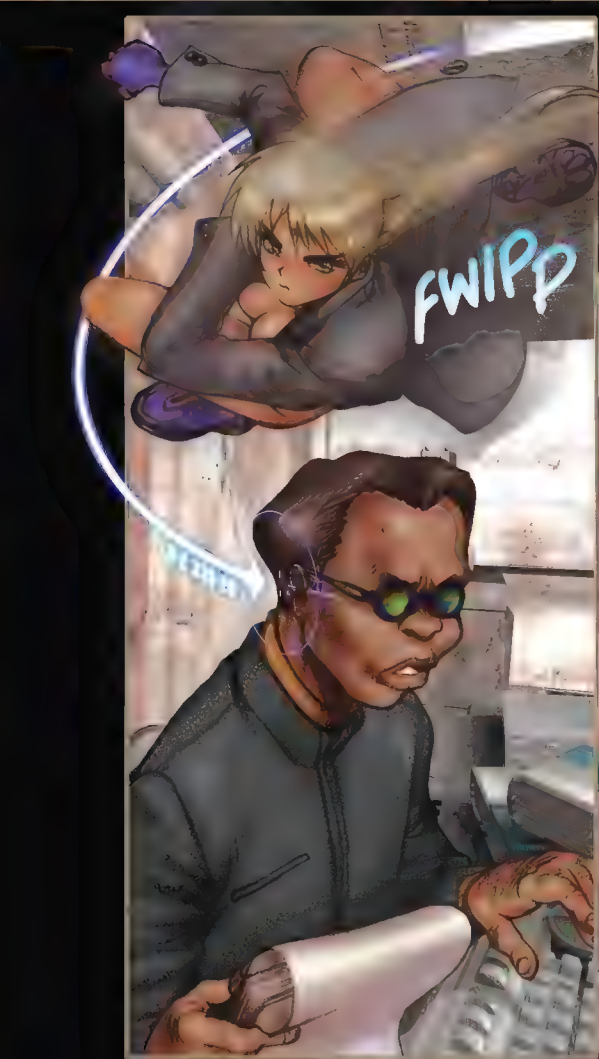
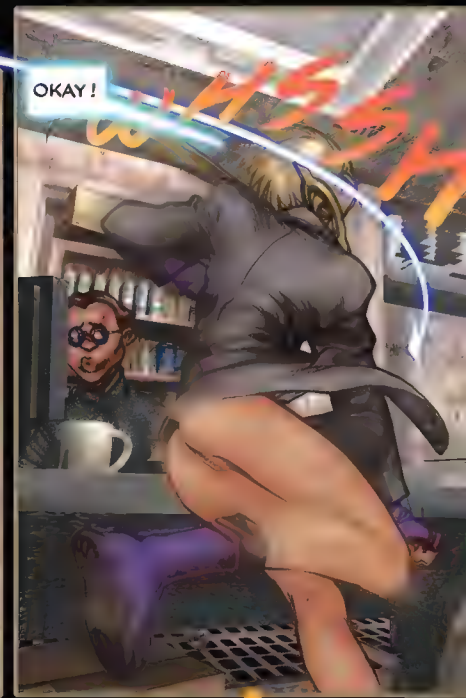
CONTROL ROOM 02
CLARICE'S EYEVUEW

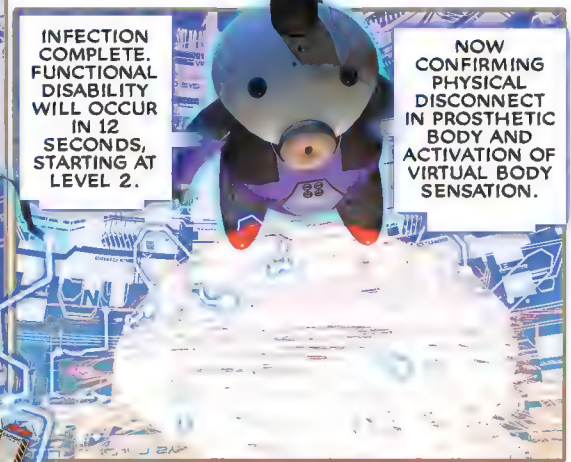
OH, AND TELL
PERSONNEL TO
CHECK ON THE
WAY THE STAFF
ARE BEING
TREATED.

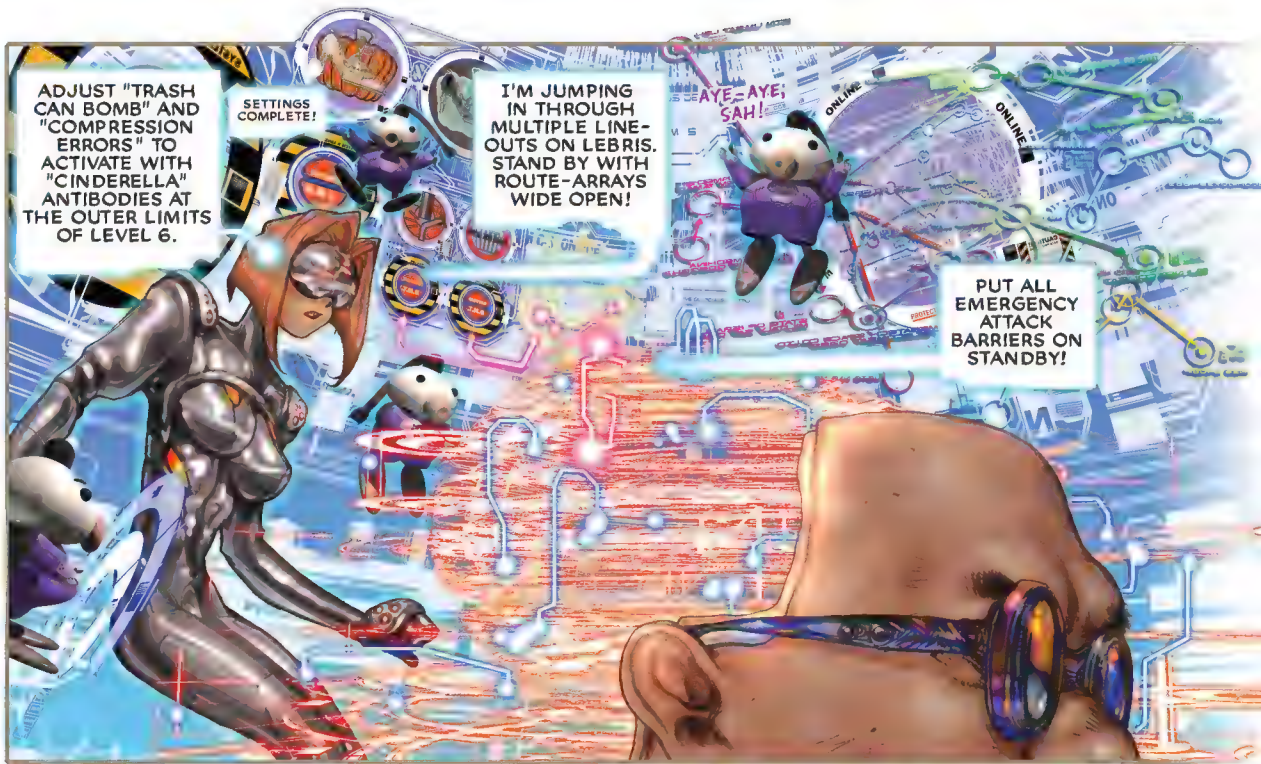
YES! MI

30
METERS
STRAIGHT
LINE TO
LEBRIS.

STAND BY
WITH F4
DECOYS!
WE'RE
GOING IN
DIRECTLY
AT LEVEL
6!







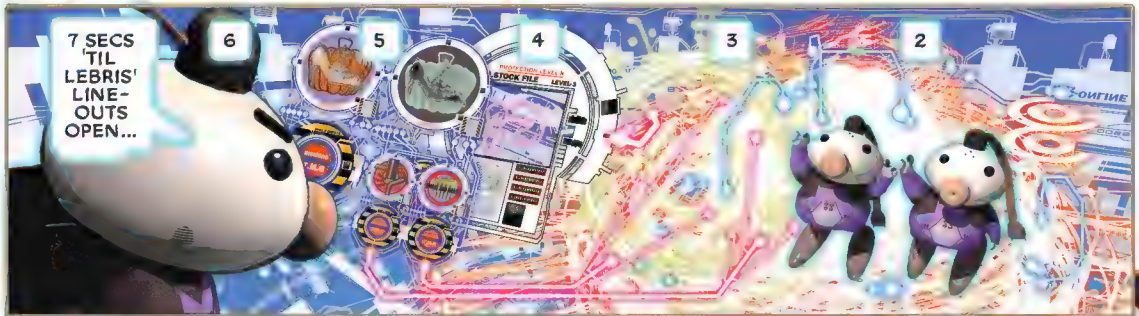
ADJUST "TRASH CAN BOMB" AND "COMPRESSION ERRORS" TO ACTIVATE WITH "CINDERELLA" ANTIBODIES AT THE OUTER LIMITS OF LEVEL 6.

SETTINGS COMPLETE!

I'M JUMPING IN THROUGH MULTIPLE LINE-OUTS ON LEBRIS. STAND BY WITH ROUTE-ARRAYS WIDE OPEN!

AYE-AYE! SAH!

PUT ALL EMERGENCY ATTACK BARRIERS ON STANDBY!



7 SECS 'TIL LEBRIS' LINE-OUTS OPEN...

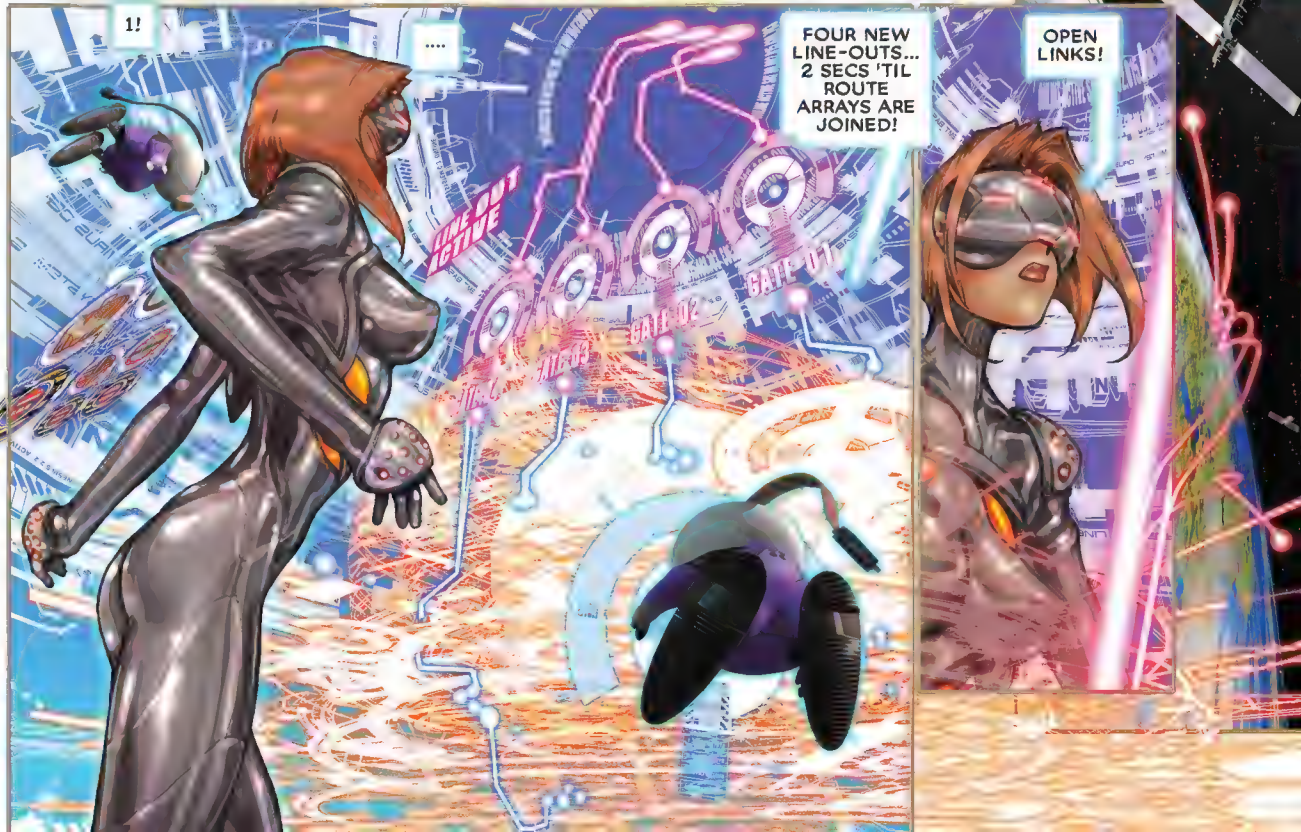
6

5

4

3

2



1!

FOUR NEW LINE-OUTS... 2 SECS 'TIL ROUTE ARRAYS ARE JOINED!

OPEN LINKS!



YOU'VE
PASSED
THE SET
POINT!
ENTERING
SATELLITE
NET VIA
GAVEL'S
GROUND
STATIONS!

FIVE
TRIP-WIRE
ALARMS
CLEARED.

NOW
SEARCHING
SUB-
BRANCHES.

SHIFTING TO
SATELLITE
RELAYS VIA
SAO PAULO
AND TEL AVIV.

72 TRAPS
RELEASED!
STILL
PROCEEDING...

THREE ROUTES
HAVE MERGED
INTO THE
MONNABIA
CABLE
NETWORK.

I'VE GOT A RETURN
ON THE HARDWARE
ANALYSIS! IT'S
EITHER THE OUTER
LIMIT OF THE
ENEMY'S BRAIN OR A
MONOGATE-CLASS
NEURO AI.

SOMETHING
BOTHERS ME
ABOUT
MONNABIA...

HANNIBAL, TRACE THE REMAINING ROUTE AS FAR AS POSSIBLE! CHUI, YOU SUPPORT HIM!

YES, MA'AM!

"CINDERELLA" ACTIVATION PINGBACKS RECEIVED...

SEARCHING ENEMY'S ANTIBODIES...

SPLIT UP THE "ANTIVIRUS AUTO-UPDATE" VIRUS AND RELEASE IT INTO THREE LINES!

MA'AM? THE DATABASE SAYS THAT VIRUS CAUSES A FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT WITH "CINDERELLA"....!

JUST DO IT!

WE FIRST TARGET THE PERIPHERAL E-BRAIN HARDWARE AND LONG-TERM MEMORY!

ENEMY VIRUS DETECTION! ANTIBODIES WORKING!

FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT IN INPUT GATE!

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES DETECTED!

ESTIMATE THE ENEMY'S ACTIVITY LOG BASED ON RESPONSE TIME, AND REPORT BACK!

USE SHORTEST ROUTE POSSIBLE TO ANCHOR ATTACK BARRIERS ON OTHER CONFIRMED GATEWAYS!

ENTERING LEVEL 2!



ENEMY VIRUS ANALYSIS COMPLETE. IT'S "PANDORA" AND "TRASH CAN BOMB!"

MAKE OUR DECOYS REACT, BUT DON'T SHOW THE ENEMY HOW WE RESPOND TO THEIR DESTRUCTION!

ENEMY SCAN HAS REACHED LEBRIS' OUTER LIMITS.

DOESN'T SEEM TO INCLUDE ANY OF THE RECOMBINANT PARTS OF "PANDORA-9" OR THE FOUR TYPES OF SELF-DISASSEMBLING VIRUSES.

THE ENEMY KNOWS WHAT IT'S DOING. IT'S THE "RETURNING ARROW" TACTIC.

JUST TO BE SURE, ALLOCATE 10% MORE EFFORT TO THE PERIPHERAL DEFENSE LINE.



IF IT WERE AN AI... YES.

I'VE FOUND THE SYS ADMIN SECTOR!

WOULDN'T IT BE FASTER TO REINFORCE OUR ATTACK GROUP?



HMM...CPU PRESSURE AND BUS INTERCEPTS ARE AWFULLY LOW.

YOU THINK THEY'RE FAKING IT?

BUT WHY...?

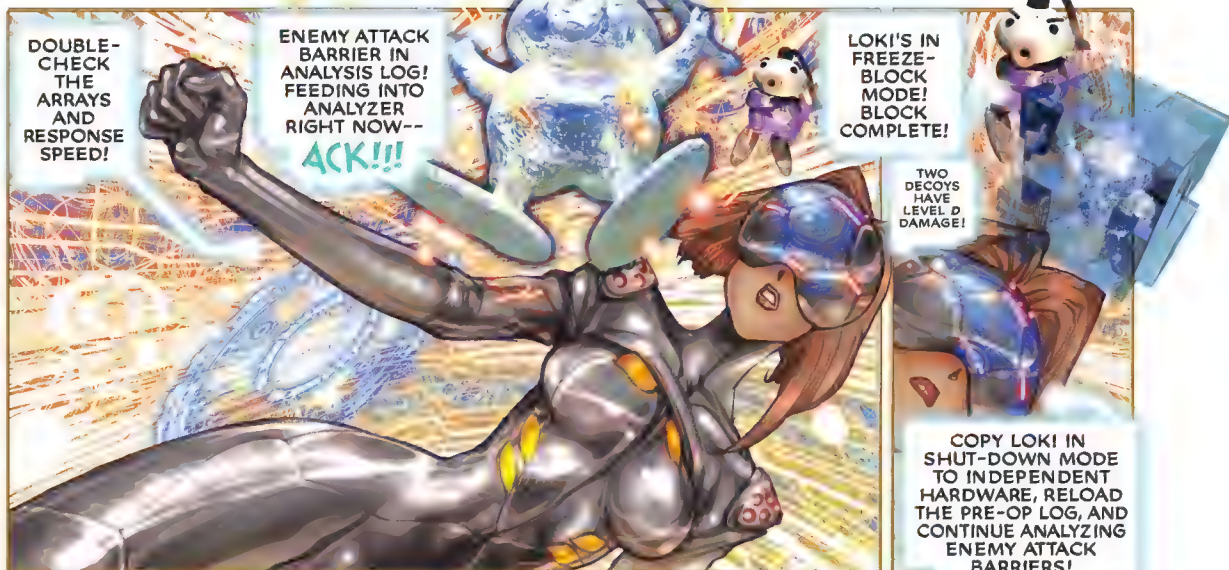


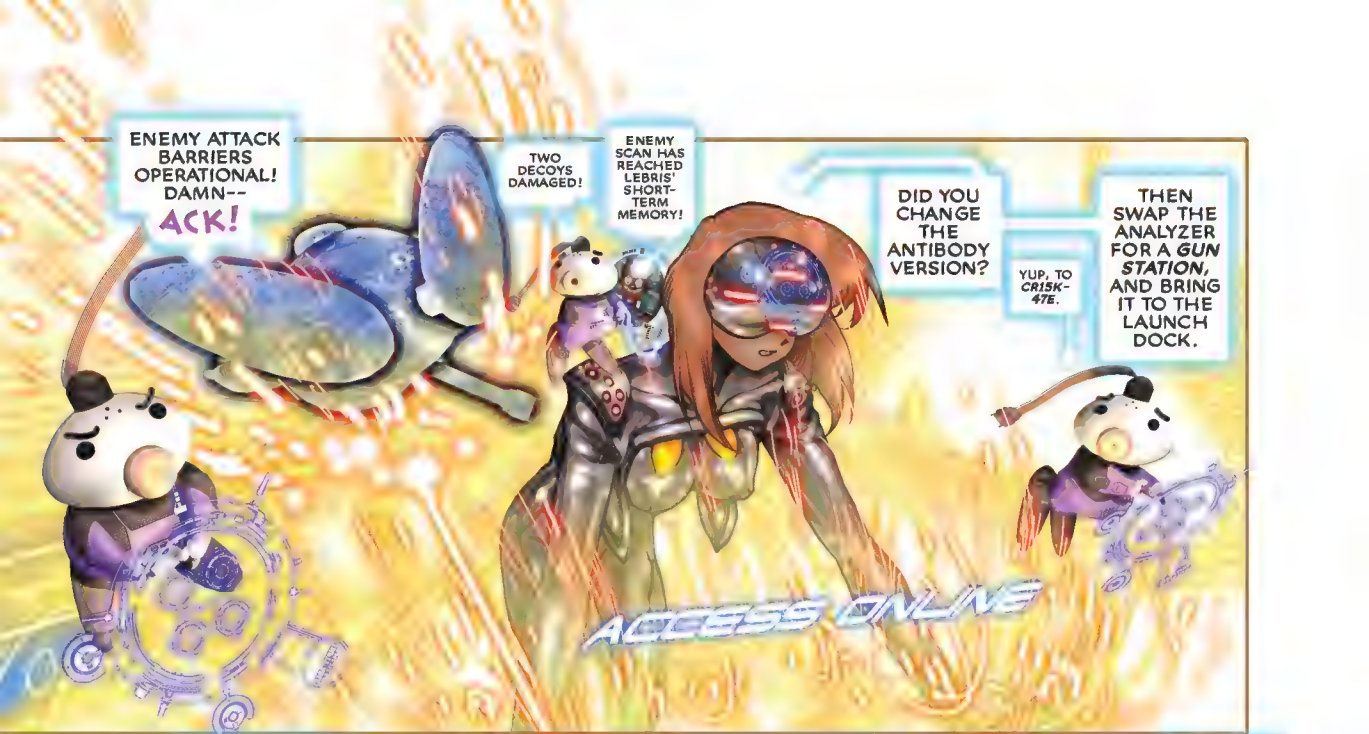
ENEMY ADDRESS ANCHORED! WE'VE SUPPRESSED THE WIRELESS ROUTES. IT'S POSSIBLE TO AVOID PHYSICALLY DISCONNECTING WIRE LINES!

DO BRANCH CHECKS AND HARDWARE ESTIMATES ONE MORE TIME!

ENTERING LEVEL 3!

Wire lines may seem an odd concept in the e-brain era. Yet for relay equipment (and surrogate devices where physical disconnects and powering off by pulling the plug are possible), there are advantages in terms of risk management.





ENEMY ATTACK
BARRIERS
OPERATIONAL!
DAMN--
ACK!

TWO
DECOYS
DAMAGED!

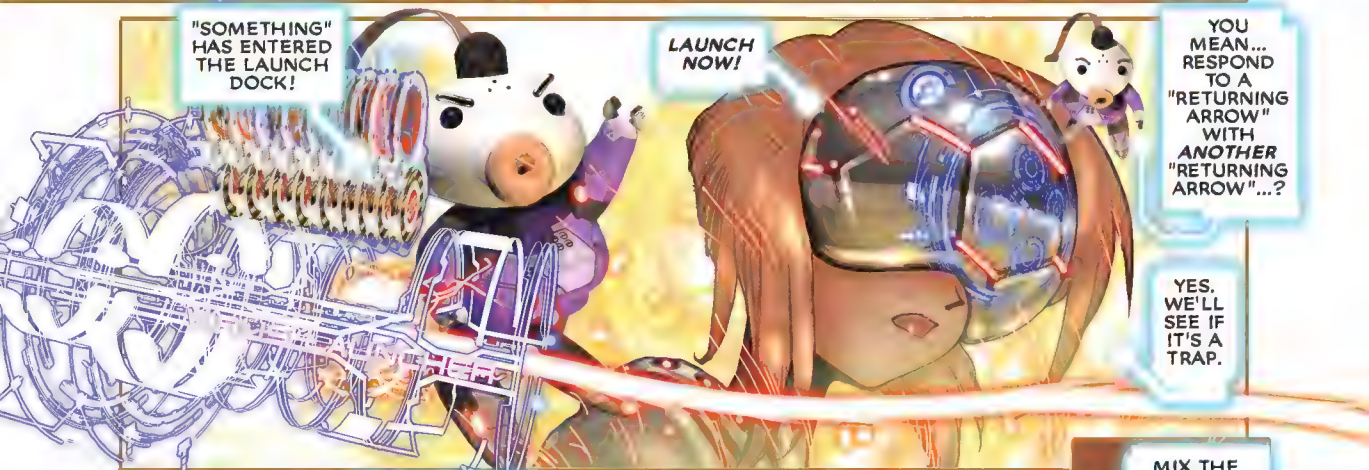
ENEMY
SCAN HAS
REACHED
LEBRIS'
SHORT-
TERM
MEMORY!

DID YOU
CHANGE
THE
ANTIBODY
VERSION?

YUP, TO
CRISK-
47E.

THEN
SWAP THE
ANALYZER
FOR A GUN
STATION,
AND BRING
IT TO THE
LAUNCH
DOCK.

ACCESS ONLINE



"SOMETHING"
HAS ENTERED
THE LAUNCH
DOCK!

LAUNCH
NOW!

YOU
MEAN...
RESPOND
TO A
"RETURNING
ARROW"
WITH
ANOTHER
"RETURNING
ARROW"...?

YES,
WE'LL
SEE IF
IT'S A
TRAP.



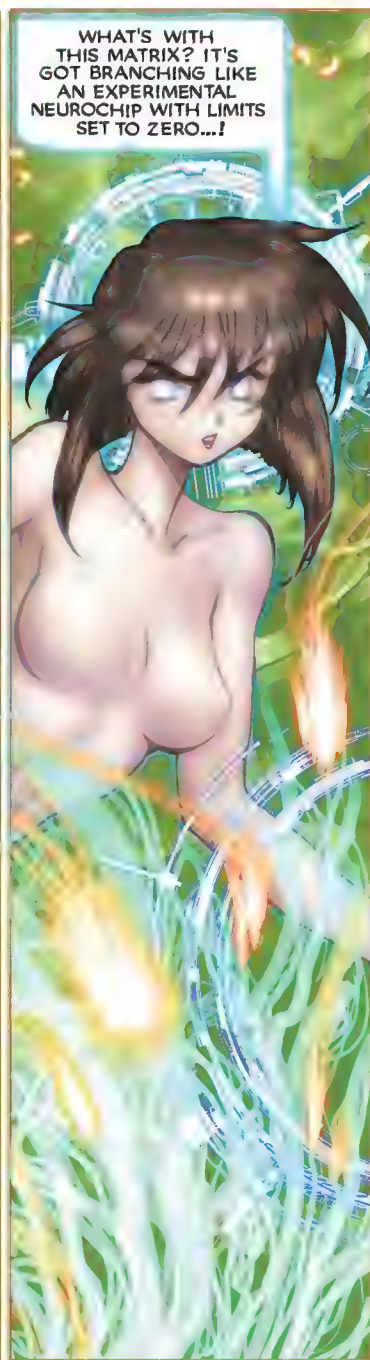
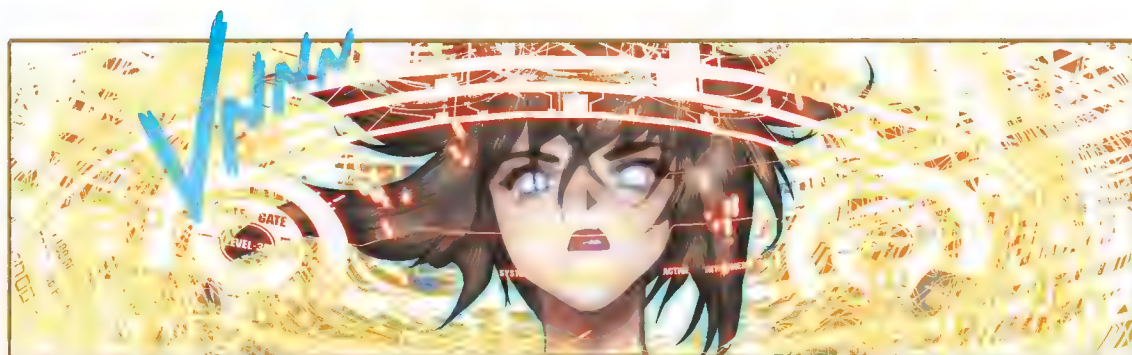
ENEMY
DEFENSE
SYSTEM
PARTIALLY
DESTROYED!


"ANTIVIRUS
AUTO-UPDATE"
VIRUS HAS BEEN
RESTORED AND
APPEARS
FUNCTIONAL.

ANCHOR IT
TO THE ENEMY'S
GATES! START
WITH A
PERIPHERAL
SEARCH! LEX,
CONTINUE
FIGHTING AS IS.
CONAN, COVER
HIM.

MIX THE
"COPY
BOMB" AND
"TROY"
VIRUSES
TOGETHER
AND
INJECT
THEM INTO
THE GATES!


LEVEL 06 MODE 0355F
015EC





ENEMY HAS INFILTRATED
LEBRIS' LEVEL 5 AND
BEGUN TO SUPPRESS
PERIPHERAL RELAYS!

IT'S OKAY...
THAT'S WHY
WE RELAYED
THROUGH
CLARICE. WE
CAN MAKE UP
FOR THREE
RELAYS...



THE D SET OF
VIRUS ARRAYS
HAVE BEEN
NEUTRALIZED,
RIGHT? IF YOU
CAN, WATCH
THE ENEMY
TRAPS AND
FIGURE OUT
HOW THEY'RE
WORKING!



I'M STILL
BAFFLED
BY THIS
BIZARRE
MEMORY
FIELD.

THERE'S AN
AWFUL LOT
OF CAPILLARY
NETSPACE
BRANCHING
HERE. I
WOND--



FLOOD!



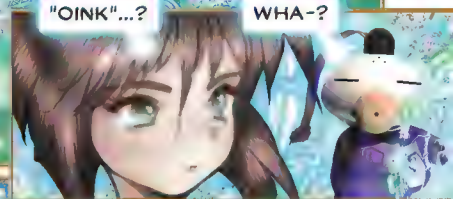
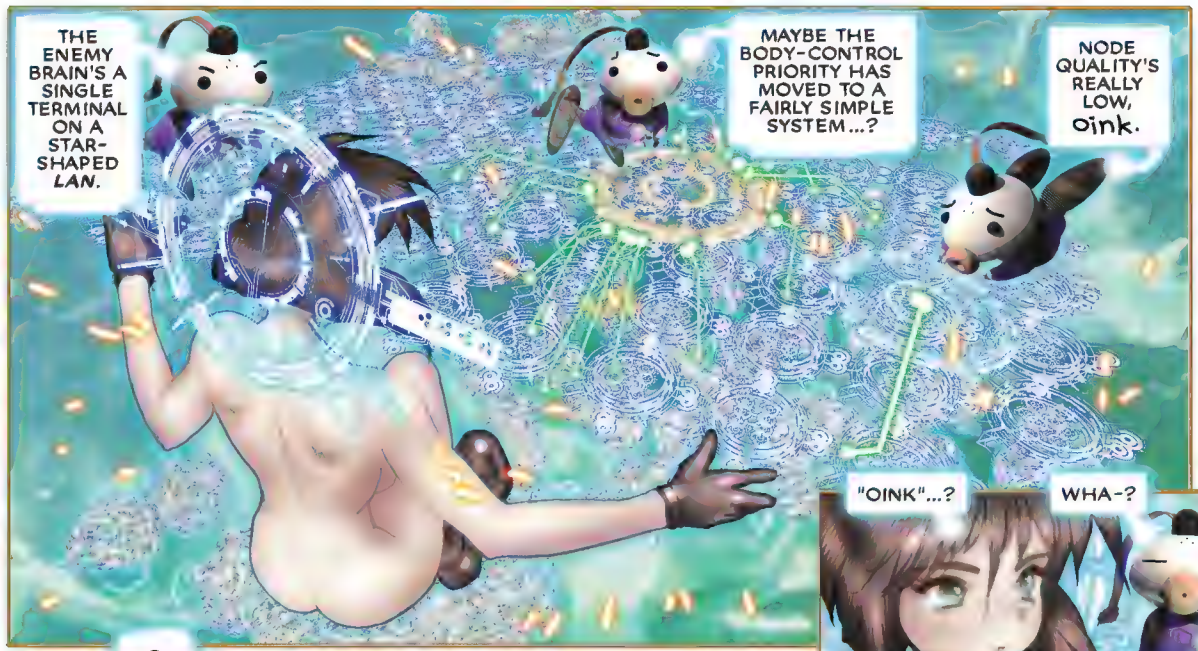
WHAT
WAS
THAT?!



CHANGE IN
ENEMY
HARDWARE!
LOOKS LIKE THEY
CONNECTED
SOMETHING!

LAN: Local Area Network. Not a huge computer network like the Internet, but a limited e-brain space (such as one might find in a corporation or a factory).

NODE: An active connecting point or juncture in a network.

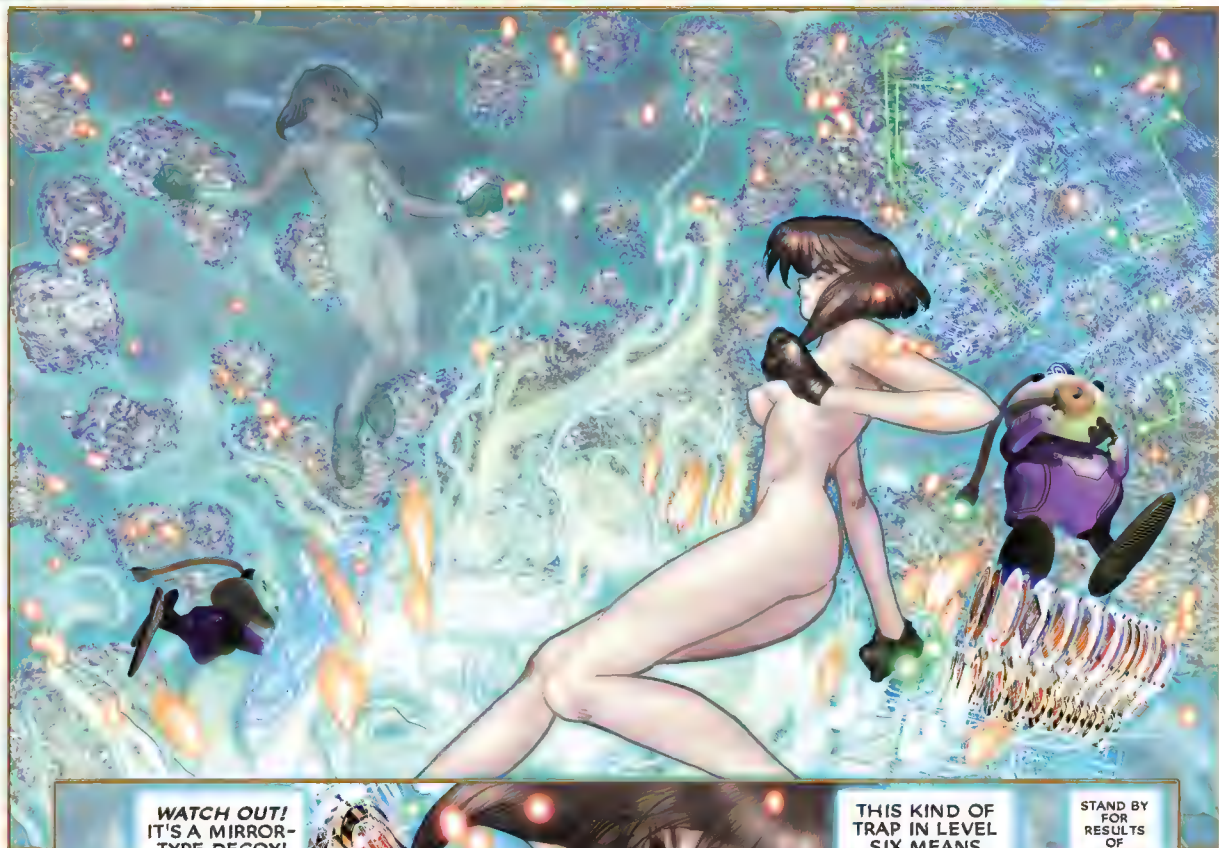




A SEGMENT
OF THE
ENEMY HAS
RANDOMIZED
AND
DISAPPEARED!

A
MIRROR?

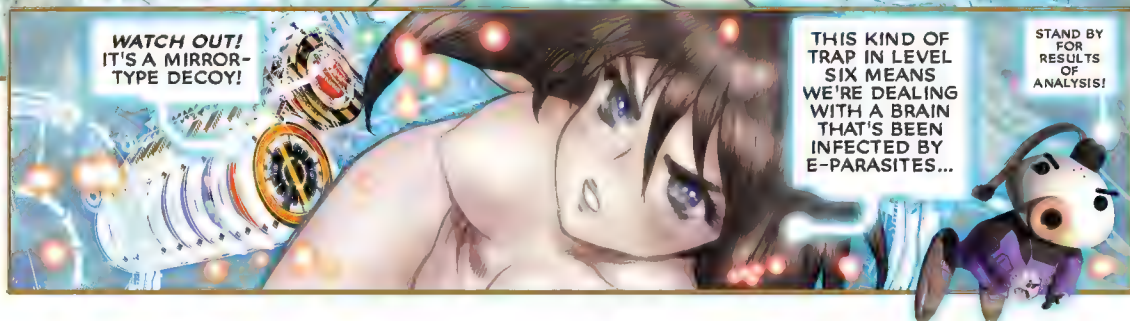
ENEMY
SYSTEM
SUPPRESSED.
NOW
RECHECKING
FOR MINES,
ETCETERA...



WATCH OUT!
IT'S A MIRROR-
TYPE DECOY!

THIS KIND OF
TRAP IN LEVEL
SIX MEANS
WE'RE DEALING
WITH A BRAIN
THAT'S BEEN
INFECTED BY
E-PARASITES...

STAND BY
FOR
RESULTS
OF
ANALYSIS!



SEARCH FOR ENEMIES AT THE GATES! THEY'RE ON THE PERIPHERY! RAISE MINE CLEARANCE AND ANTI-IMMUNE FACTORS TO CONDITION BLUE!

HANNIBAL! WHERE'S THAT TRACE REPORT?!

CHUI HERE. HANNIBAL'S FROZEN. ALL DECOYS ARE HEAVILY DAMAGED! WE'RE TRYING TO RESTORE HIM RIGHT NOW...

WE'VE FINISHED SEARCHING EVERYWHERE EXCEPT THE "LOST" AREAS. NO PARASITES DETECTED.

CURRENTLY RUNNING FOURTH TEST ITERATION....

SO THEY GOT AWAY...?

RUN A THOROUGH SEARCH FOR ANY TRACE OF THE ENEMY AND DO A FULL OMEGA TYPE ANALYSIS ON THIS BRAIN!

THERE'S A MONITORING SYSTEM ON THE LAN THAT THIS BRAIN'S ATTACHED TO.

THEN SUPPRESS IT AND SEARCH ALL BRANCHES!

256 MINES ELIMINATED. NOW RELAYING TO VISUAL FIELD.

ANTI-IMMUNE FACTORS: A somewhat confusing term, but when a "ghost" inhabits another's brain as a parasite, it deploys more than antibodies and virus checkers--it also uses viruses and gates to suppress the host's self-awareness and ability to reject foreign data. After the parasite ghost withdraws from its host, it may leave behind traces, which can cause an information immune-system deficiency.

SINCE
WHEN DID
MONNABIA
HAVE SUCH
A HUGE
LAN...?

WHAT
TH--?!



THESE ARE
THE DONOR
PIGS IN
MEDITECH'S
PLANT
NUMBER
ONE!

PROTECTION LEVEL 2

CAUTION



MAYBE THE PIGS
HAVE JOINED
FORCES TO
REVOLT AGAINST
MEDITECH?

YOU'VE GOT
QUITE AN
IMAGINATION,
DANTE.

OUR COMPANY'S
PIGS AREN'T
SUPPOSED TO
HAVE HUMAN
BRAINS...IT'S
AGAINST
INTERNATIONAL
LAW! GET ME
MANAGEMENT
CHARTS AND A
PIG SCAN
REPORT!

SINCE WHEN
HAVE WE
CARED ABOUT
INTERNATIONAL
LAW, MISTRESS?

MAKE OFFICIAL
CONTACT WITH
THE PLANT
THROUGH
LEBRIS, AND
SEARCH THE
PERIPHERY OF
THE PLANT FOR
ANY UNUSUAL
WIRES!

YES,
MA'AM!

I'LL USE
THE CEBOTS
IN THE
PLANT...

UM...I PUT TOGETHER
THIS GRAPH OF
ORDERS FOR EACH
TYPE OF ORGAN
BEING GROWN. NO
HUMAN BRAINS
RECORDED, WITH
100% OF SEARCH
COMPLETED.

THEIR NERVOUS
SYSTEMS SEEM
WELL DEVELOPED,
BUT THEY'RE NOT
FUNCTIONING AS
HUMANS...

BUT THEY ARE
VERY
INTELLIGENT...

UNDER
INTERNATIONAL
LAW THESE
AREN'T HUMAN-
PIGS, BUT PIG-
HUMANS...

SHALL
WE
SNUFF
'EM?

WE'RE UP
AGAINST A
TOUGH ENEMY
HERE. WONDER
WHEN IT
INFILTRATED
MEDITECH...?

YOU THINK THE
ENEMY OBTAINED
INFORMATION
ON MONNABIA'S
FUTURE
SCHEDULING
FROM LEBRIS'
BRAIN? WHAT
KIND OF SWEEP
DID THEY DO?

LOOKS LIKE
THEY EXPANDED
IMMEDIATELY FROM
LEVEL 5 AND LIFTED
ALL PERIPHERAL
INFO IN ONE
BEAUTIFUL SWEEP.
BUT THEY LEFT
LEBRIS IN GOOD
CONDITION.

AFTER THE
TERROR
ATTACK,
OUR
COMPANY
AND
MONNABIA
MUST HAVE
HAD AN
EMERGENCY
MEETING...

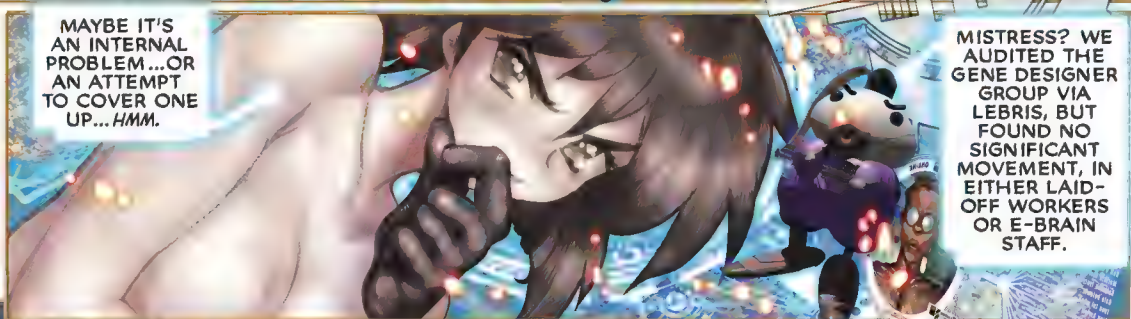
AH?!



WAIT A SEC...THIS MEANS WE'RE DEALING WITH TWO ENEMIES!

ONE'S TURNED OUR HUMAN-PIGS INTO PIG-HUMANS AND IS USING THE BRAINS. THE OTHER'S RAIDED THEM... INTERESTING!

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN, THOUGH?



MAYBE IT'S AN INTERNAL PROBLEM...OR AN ATTEMPT TO COVER ONE UP...HMM.

MISTRESS? WE AUDITED THE GENE DESIGNER GROUP VIA LEBRIS, BUT FOUND NO SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT, IN EITHER LAID-OFF WORKERS OR E-BRAIN STAFF.



HMPH...

SHIVA! RETRIEVE CLARICE, DO A MAG-KILL, RELOAD AND SLEEP!

YES'M! WE'VE GOT A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS REPORT ALREADY... SHE NEEDS DELTA LEVEL MAINTENANCE DONE.



WHAT IF THE
ENEMY--WITH
GOOD INTENTIONS--
SIMPLY WANTED TO
LET US KNOW IT'S
BEEN USING ILLEGAL
HUMAN BRAIN
COPIES FROM PIGS
DESIGNED TO
MANUFACTURE
HUMAN ORGANS...?

GET ME A
LIST OF ALL
PERSONNEL
INVOLVED
AT THE
GENETIC
DESIGN
STAGE.

ROGER!

AND PUT
TOGETHER A
DATA-HUMINT
REPORT ON ANY
CHANGES IN
THEIR ECONOMIC
SITUATION,
RELATIONSHIPS,
AND
PHILOSOPHIES.

GROAN...

ALSO, LET
ME KNOW
WHAT THEIR
DEFENSE
STRATEGY
AGAINST
E-THUGS
WAS AT
THE TIME.

SECURITY REPORT
2030.08.01.AM03:02
MARK CHAZWICK
SECTION B-01H-0023

RIGHT
AWAY!

CHUI, YOU LOOK FOR
ANY TRACES OF THE
ENEMY, AND ANALYZE
THEM FOR
CROSSLINKS.

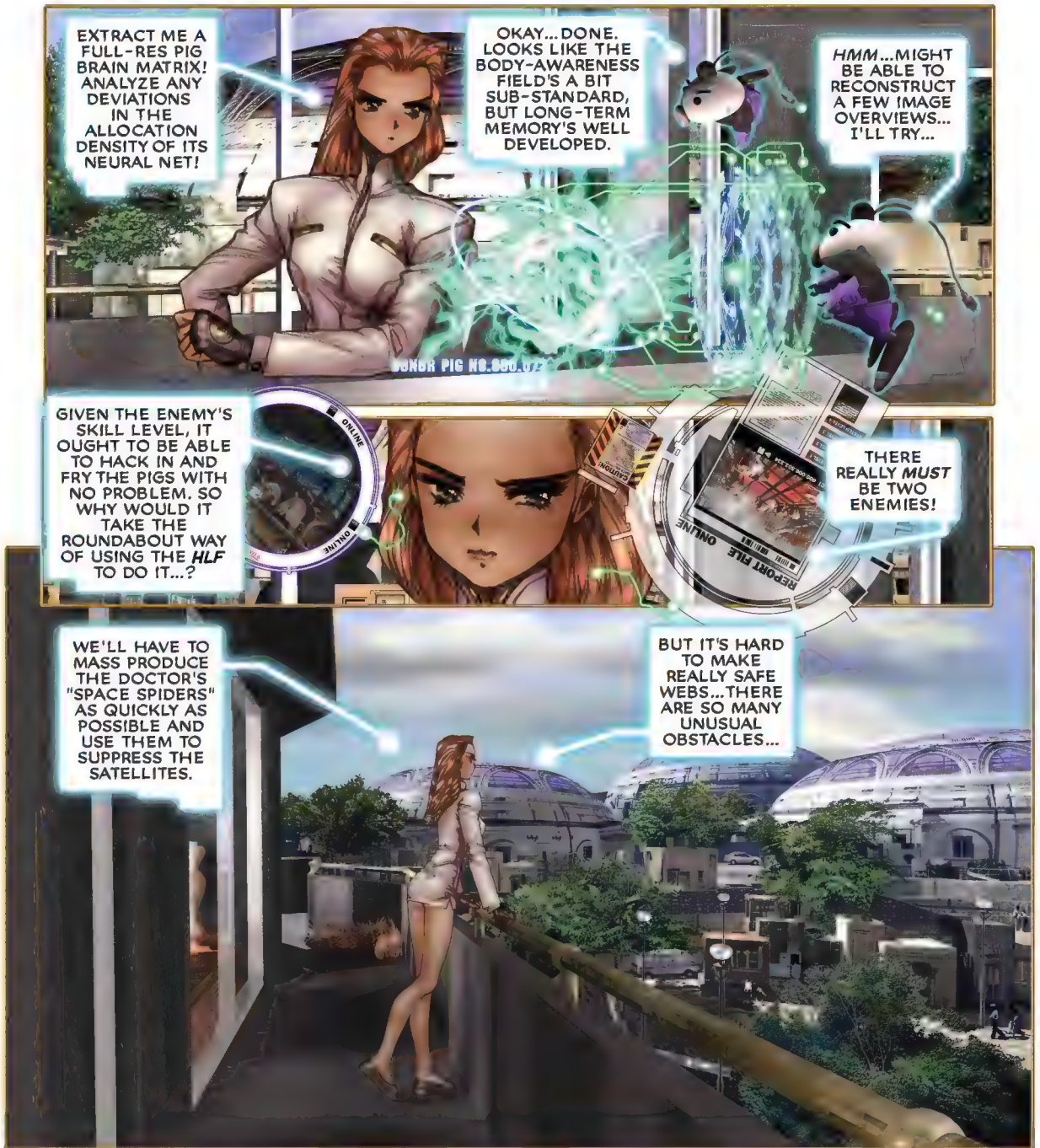
HMM...

BUT
WHY
PIGS?

AND NOT
NEURO-
NET AI?

WHY'D
THEY
WANT TO
LINK SO
MANY
HUMAN
BRAINS?

MAYBE
BECAUSE
IT'S
FUN...?



In this case, "FRY" means destroying the pig's e-brains using an attack barrier.



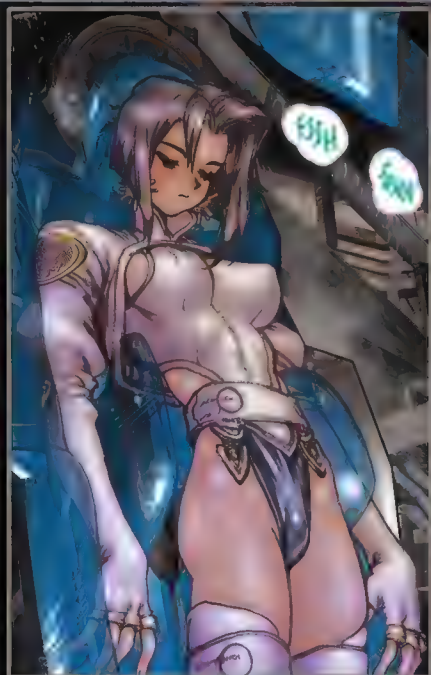
03 CIRCUIT WEAPON



2035.03.06.PM01:12

CAUTION!!

POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL: DEPTH, 50 METERS
THIS IS THE INSIDE OF A FLOATING BLOCK BUILT TO THE SPECS (ON PAPER,
AT LEAST) OF A SUBMARINE SUPPORT SHIP ALLEGED TO BE OWNED BY CUBA.
IT'S MOTOKO'S "SECRET BASE."



SO, MR. REPLIANO...YOU'RE SAYING THAT RELIGION, OR GOD, **HAS** TO ALLOW LIFE-SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AS IT RELATES TO BRAINS AND EMBRYOS?

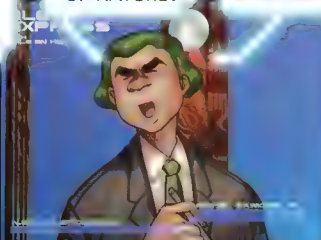
IF GOD IS OMNIPOTENT, IT'S SIMPLY A LOGICAL DECISION.

BESIDES, IN MOST RELIGIONS, MEDICINE HAS AN ETHICAL AND LOGICAL BASIS--

NO! I SAY WE SHOULD ABIDE BY THE PRINCIPLES OF NATURE.

E-BRAINS, PROSTHETIC BODIES, AND ORGAN BANKS ARE **ALL** BLASPHEMOUS!

SO THE DYING SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND **DIE**...?

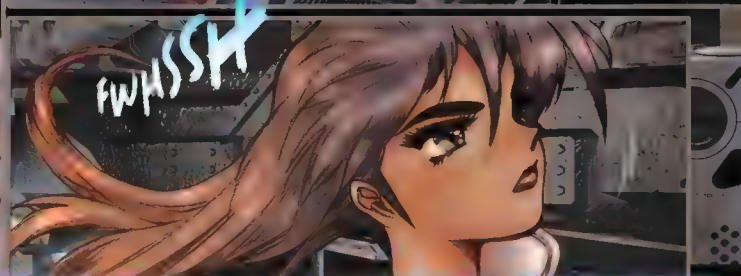




LEX! CONAN! GUARD THE NEST. DON'T FORGET TO DO A FULL PULSE SWEEP AND ESTABLISH AN ELECTRICAL SHIELD DEFENSE!

ROGER! WE'LL PLACE A FOUR MEG-AMP POTENTIAL ON THE SEA WATER IN THE DOCK.

HMM...I HAVEN'T BEEN ON LAND FOR A LONG TIME... FEELS STRANGE.



SO YOU THINK IT'S MORE "NATURAL" **NOT** TO HELP PEOPLE EVEN IF WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO DO SO?

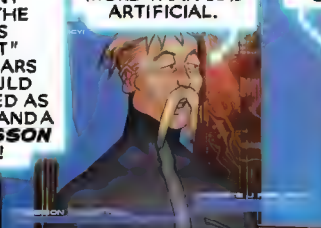
LISTEN, HELPING PEOPLE IS AN ALTRUISTIC AND **SPIRITUAL** ACT.

REPLACING BODIES THE WAY YOU WOULD MANUFACTURED GOODS IS AN **ENTIRELY** DIFFERENT MATTER. THE "CARLOS INCIDENT" TWELVE YEARS AGO SHOULD HAVE SERVED AS A **MORAL LESSON** FOR US!

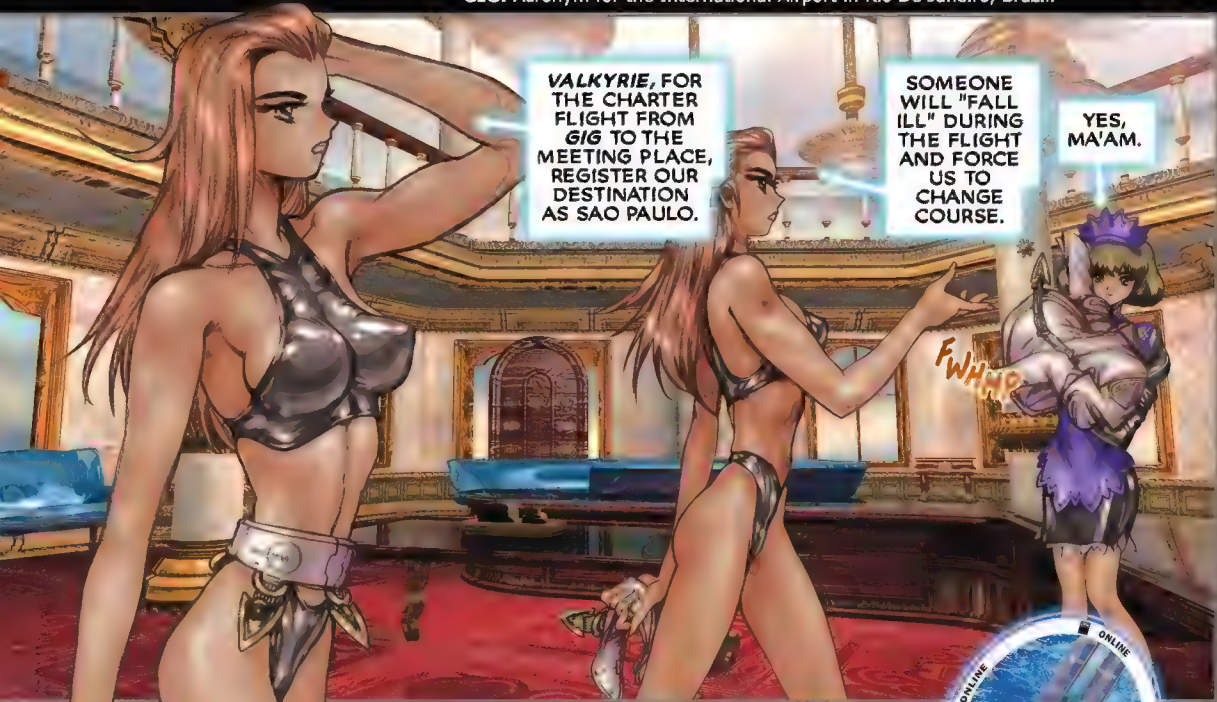
ACCORDING TO LAST YEAR'S STATISTICS, 2.45 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE ALREADY MORE THAN 10% ARTIFICIAL.

NOT ALL POPULATIONS ARE GOING TO RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT UNDER IDEAL CONDITIONS.

EACH COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN PROBLEMS, AND THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT MY COMPANY CAN DO...



Note: Like a fish's gills, Moboko's hair breathes in oxygen underwater. It can expand and contract, and it has air passages, so it's very light, compact, and easy to carry. Using optical camouflage principles, its color can also be varied, to a certain degree.



VALKYRIE, FOR THE CHARTER FLIGHT FROM GIG TO THE MEETING PLACE, REGISTER OUR DESTINATION AS SAO PAULO.

SOMEONE WILL "FALL ILL" DURING THE FLIGHT AND FORCE US TO CHANGE COURSE.

YES, MA'AM.

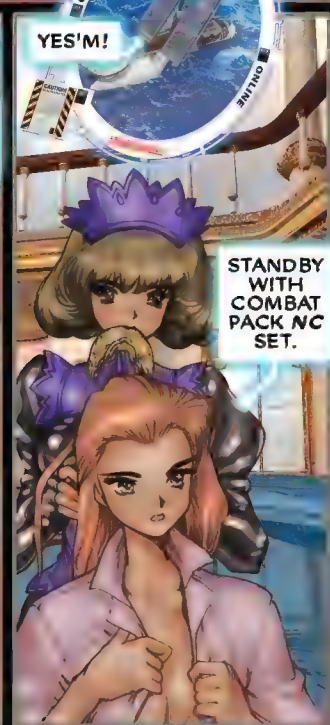
FWHMP



SHALL I PREPARE A "SICK PERSON"....?

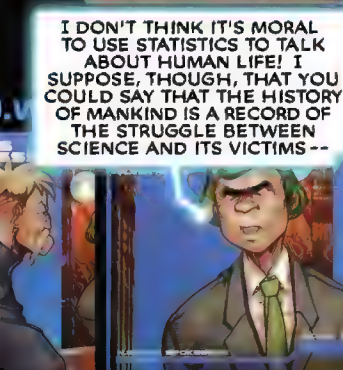


NO. MAX... I NEED YOU TO PREPARE BACKUP ELECTRONIC DEFENSES FOR THE CHARTER FLIGHT!



YES'M!

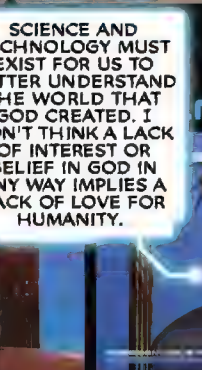
STANDBY WITH COMBAT PACK NC SET.



I DON'T THINK IT'S MORAL TO USE STATISTICS TO TALK ABOUT HUMAN LIFE! I SUPPOSE, THOUGH, THAT YOU COULD SAY THAT THE HISTORY OF MANKIND IS A RECORD OF THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND ITS VICTIMS --



I'M SORRY, GENTLEMEN, BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME HERE. ONE LAST COMMENT FROM EACH OF YOU-- MR. REPLIANO...?



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUST EXIST FOR US TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE WORLD THAT GOD CREATED. I DON'T THINK A LACK OF INTEREST OR BELIEF IN GOD IN ANY WAY IMPLIES A LACK OF LOVE FOR HUMANITY.



WE'VE DONE OUR BEST TO IMPROVE LIFE FOR ALL, AND WE'LL CONTINUE TO DO SO.

N.N. B. EXPRESS



NO, NO!
THAT'S THE
A-SET! PUT
IT BACK!

MAX! LEX! STAY
ON GUARD
WITH B-1 AND
EQUIP IT WITH
A STANDARD
COMBAT BODY.



AYE-AYE!

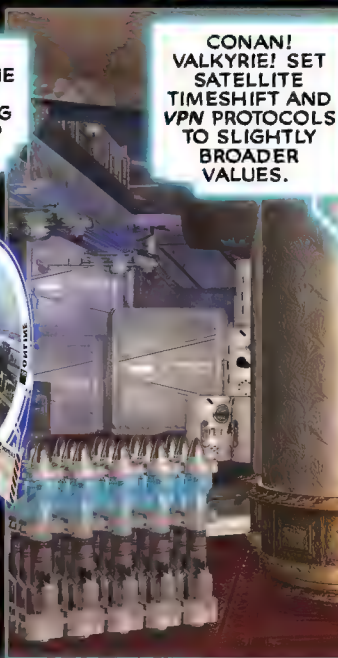
CHK

STITCHES



EXIT IS ZONE C,
BAY NO. 16,
LADIES ROOM...
CLEAR! MAX AND
LEX ARE WAITING
AT THE EXIT.

DECOT
OFFICE ONE
NOW
SWITCHING
TO SLEEP
MODE.



CONAN!
VALKYRIE! SET
SATELLITE
TIMESHIFT AND
VPN PROTOCOLS
TO SLIGHTLY
BROADER
VALUES.

WELL, HAVING A BELIEF IN GOD DOESN'T MEAN YOU
CAN JUST DO *ANYTHING*. MEDICINE IS SUPPOSED TO
COME FROM THE HEART...THE SOUL! IT'S NOT JUST A
MARKETPLACE FOR TESTING INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS.
WE'VE GOT TO USE CARE--COMBINED WITH A SENSE
OF *REAL* ETHICS--AND REGULATE THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS BUSINESS.

GENTLE-
MEN,
THANK
YOU
VERY
MUCH.

FOR A
TRANSCRIPT
AND FURTHER
DISCUSSION OF
SPECIFIC THEMES,
PLEASE VISIT
OUR WEBSITE.

TOMORROW
WE'LL HAVE A
REPORT ON
CYBERDOME
DEPENDENCY
SYNDROME
AND NEURAL
MYASTHENIA...

N.W.N.

RESS



I've always thought that the transforming clothes shown in manga and anime over the years look fake. I've never seen it, but there apparently is already a dress made with a concept like that of Motoko's. Optical camouflage is common in her world, so it makes sense that there would be clothes that could change pattern, or have exceptional elasticity, or even shape-memory functions, right? After all, Motoko never knows when she's going to have to fight someone or run for it, so these are highly appreciated features. Now, don't tell me she doesn't have to be wearing a micro-mini, and that her dress could always be much longer and be "highly elastic" instead...



MARUYAMA!
GET ME
CONFIRMATION
FROM HQ WITH
P4! ON THE
DOUBLE!

YES,
SIR!



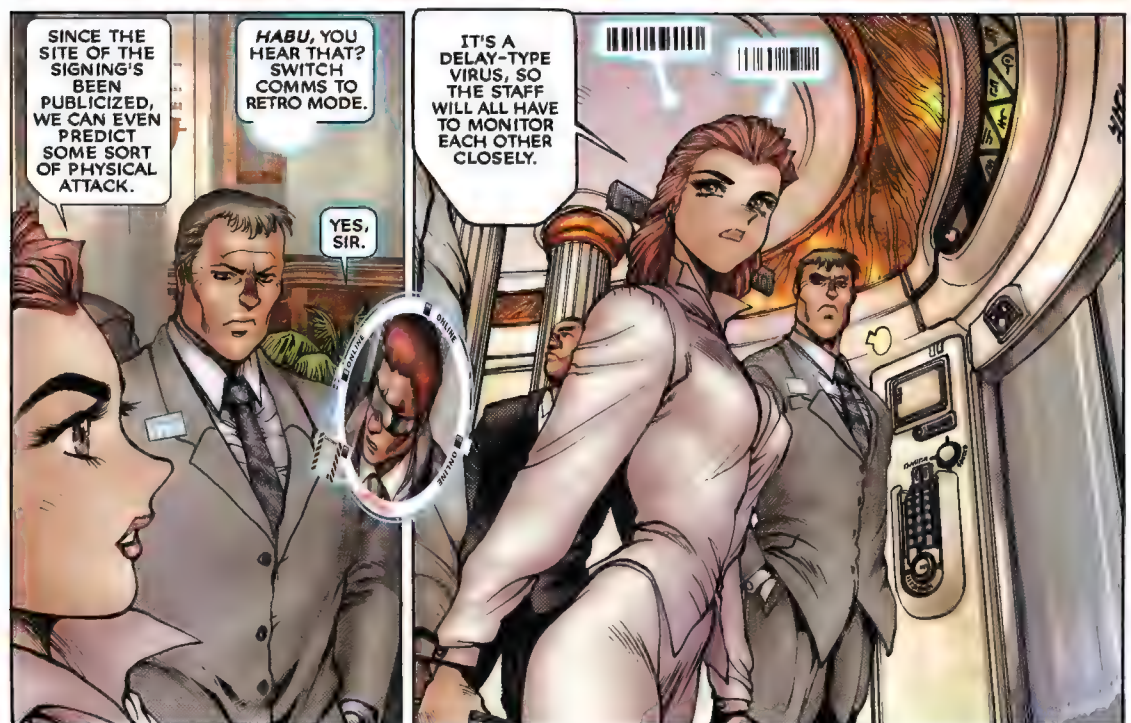
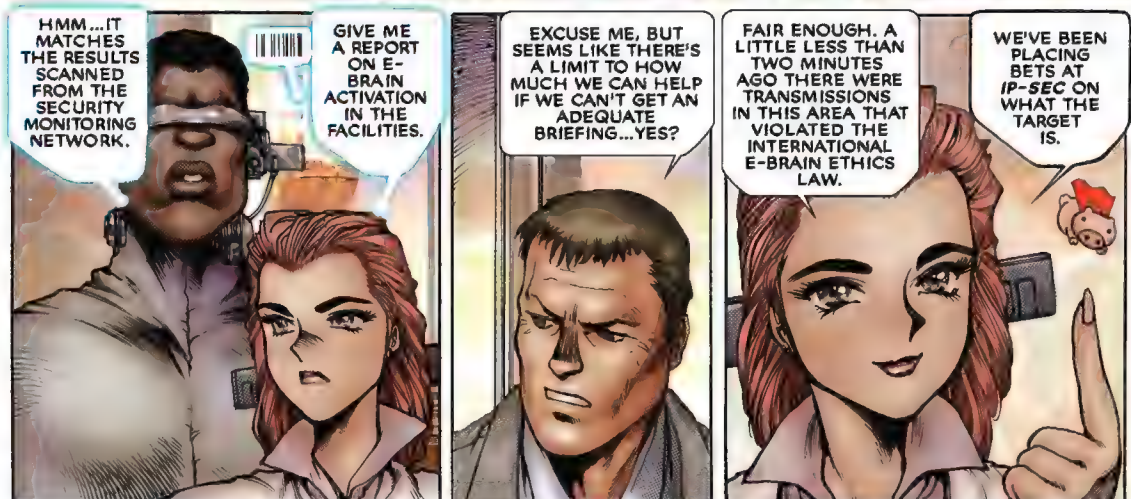
THE
PLEASURE'S
MINE. AND
WHAT A
SURPRISE TO
BE MET
PERSONALLY
BY YOU, MR.
LEE--CHIEF
OF SECURITY.

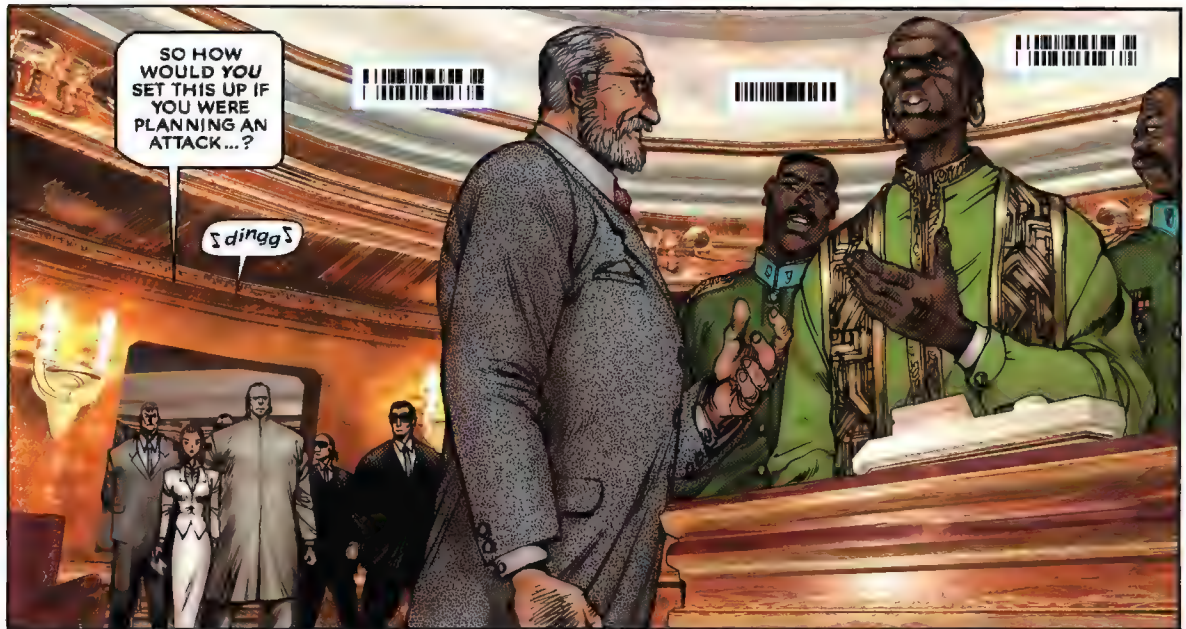


MOTOKO
ARAMAKI...
WHAT A
SURPRISE
TO SEE YOU
HERE...









SO HOW WOULD YOU SET THIS UP IF YOU WERE PLANNING AN ATTACK...?

\$dingg\$

MAYBE USE AN INTERPRETER OR SECRETARY? SOMEONE CLOSE TO THE VIP... IT'D BE EASY TO INFECT 'EM THROUGH THEIR SPEECH SOFTWARE.

BUT WHAT IF THE VIP'S E-BRAIN WAS DIRECTLY HACKED?

HUH! JUST HAVE TO PRAY THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN, I GUESS.

YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE IF YOU HAD CONFIDENCE IN OUR ATTACK BARRIER... RIGHT?

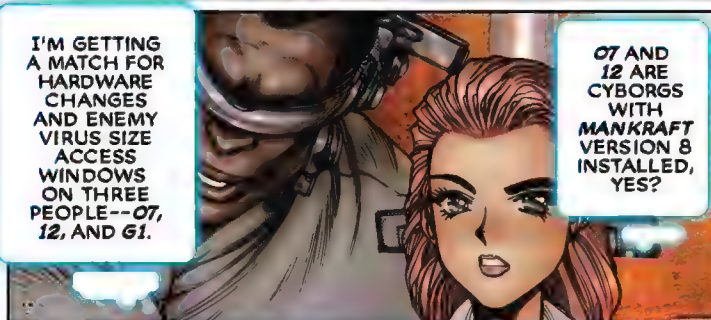
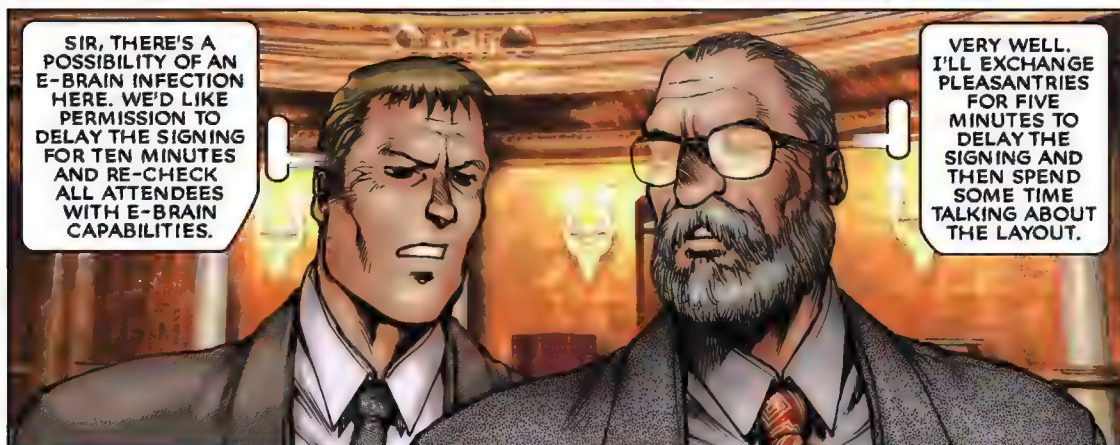
THE RUMORS ABOUT ME HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN INCORRECT. I'M JUST HERE TO OBSERVE, THEN I'M OUTTA HERE.

B-BUT I THOUGHT YOU CAME TO PREVENT AN ATTACK!

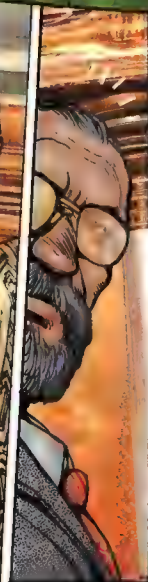
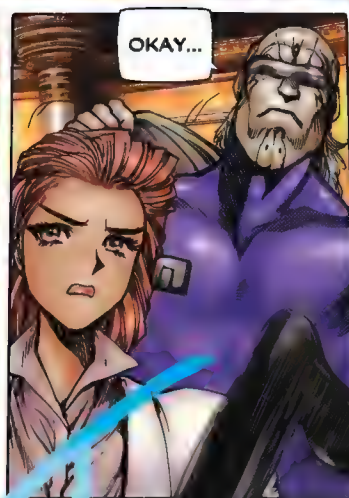
NOPE. JUST COLLECTING DATA.



Simply scrambling the interpreting could create an interesting disruption. In this case, however, every person's capable of interpreting and they're constantly checking what others are saying, so scrambling one person's speech wouldn't affect the entire meeting. The building's heavily guarded, so just tossing a bomb isn't going to work, either. The only way to disrupt a meeting like this is to plant a saboteur on the inside. Beyond the actual targets, the virus in question here creates lots of collateral casualties on the periphery.



MANKRAFT V8: This famous brand of combat software emphasizes martial arts using simple weapons such as knives, sticks, etc. In this fictional world U.S. army cyborgs officially use it, and apparently the East Monnabia SP do, too. Version 8 onward supports grenade tossing, but there have been an increasing number of physical problems with finger and arm-joint hyperextensions.

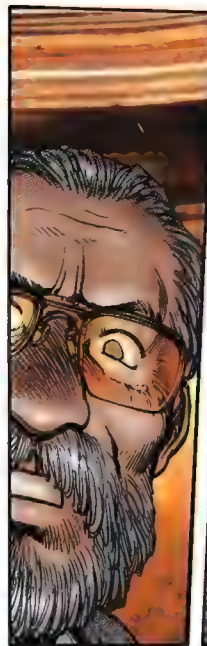




I...I CAN'T-- STOP?!

HABU! THE PRESIDENT!

ON IT!!

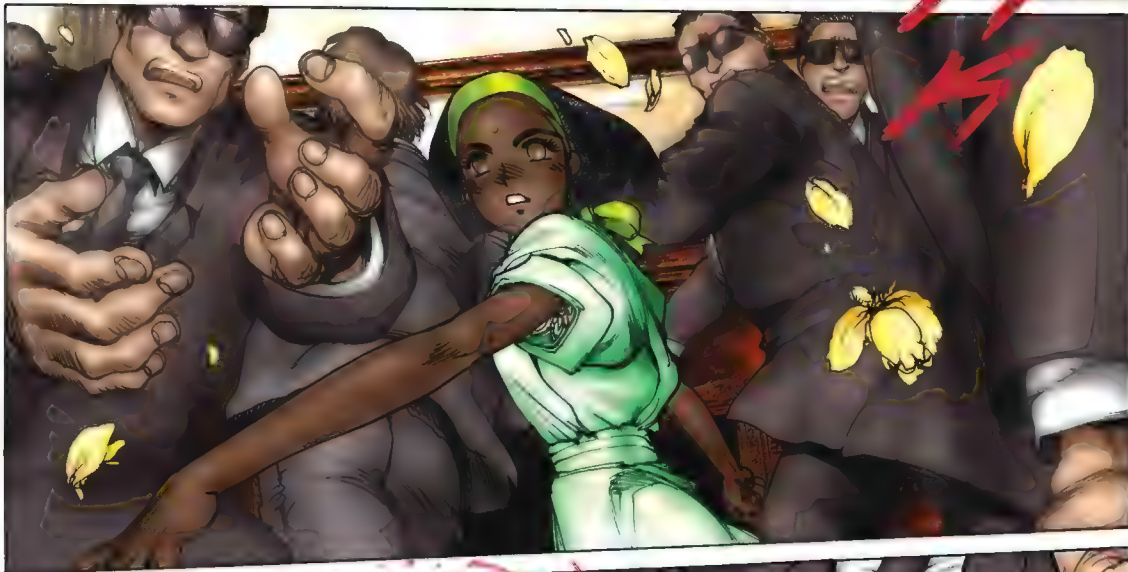


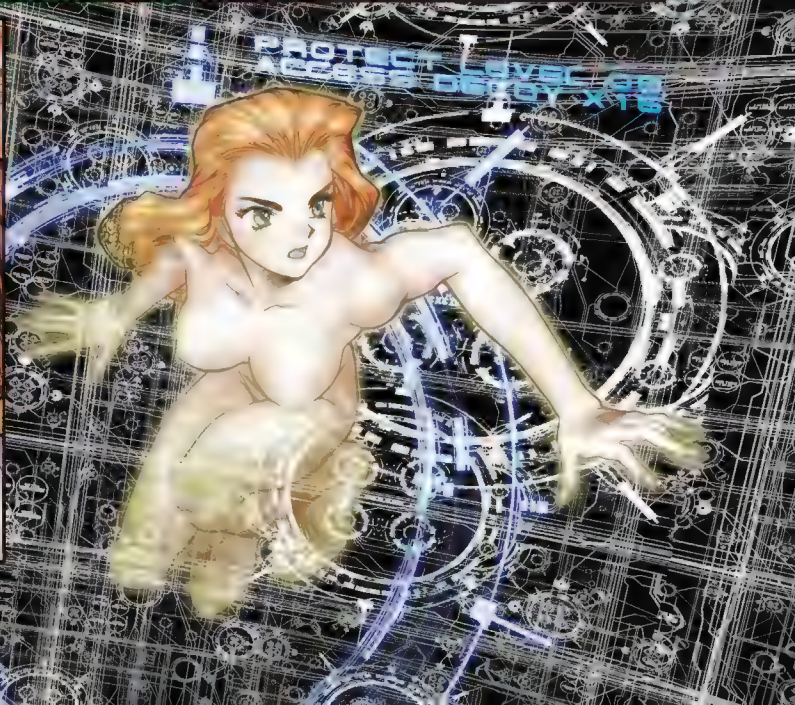
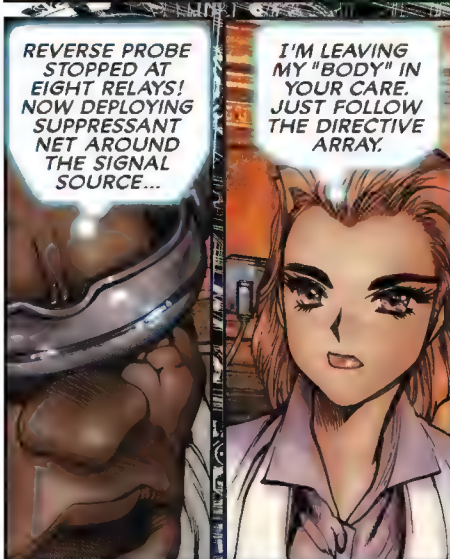
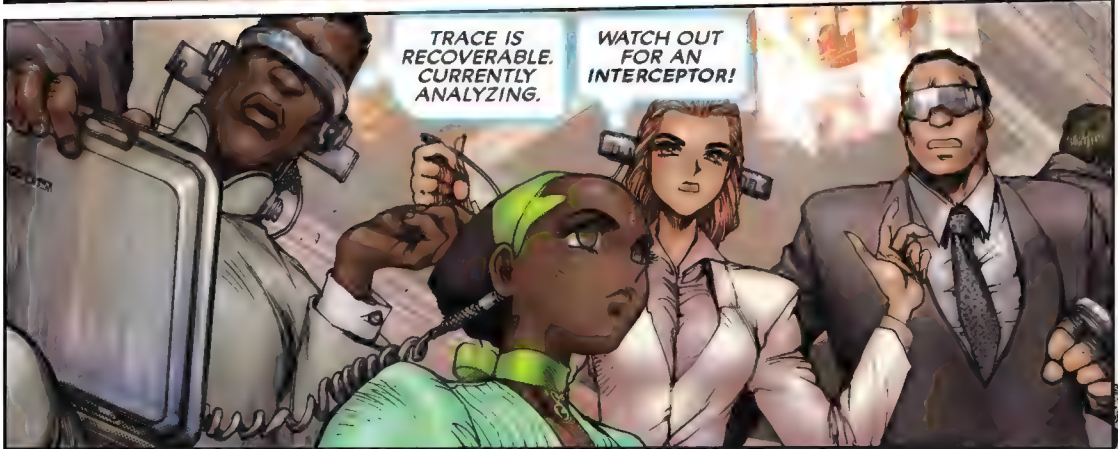
SHKK

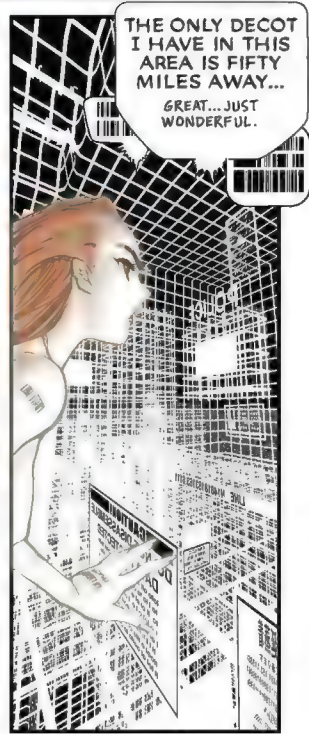
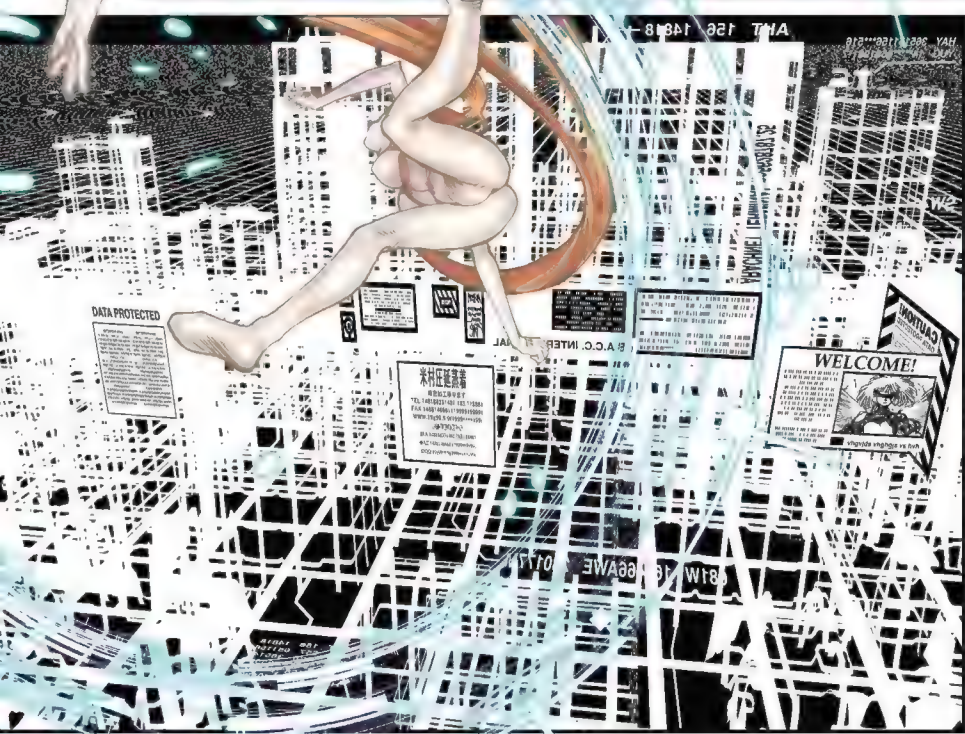
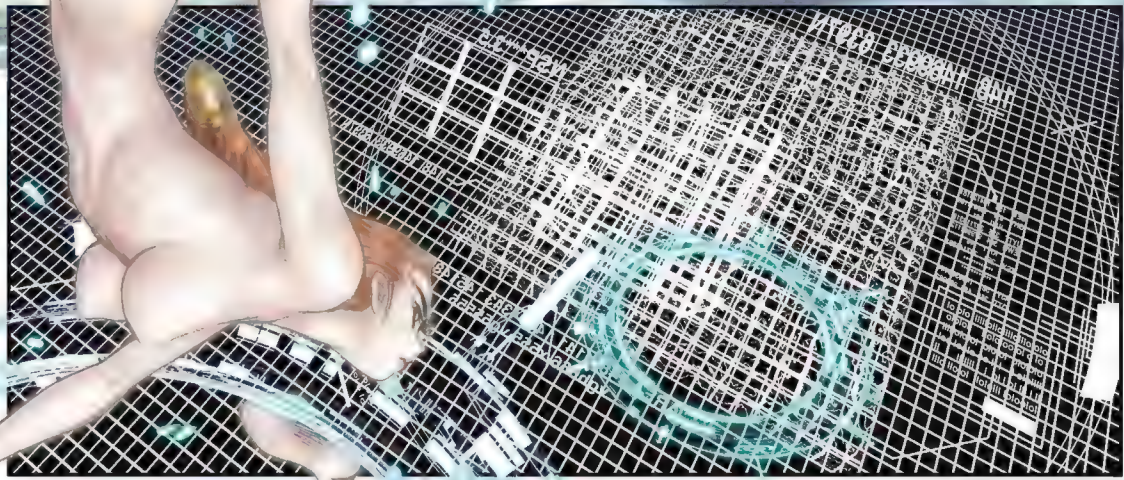
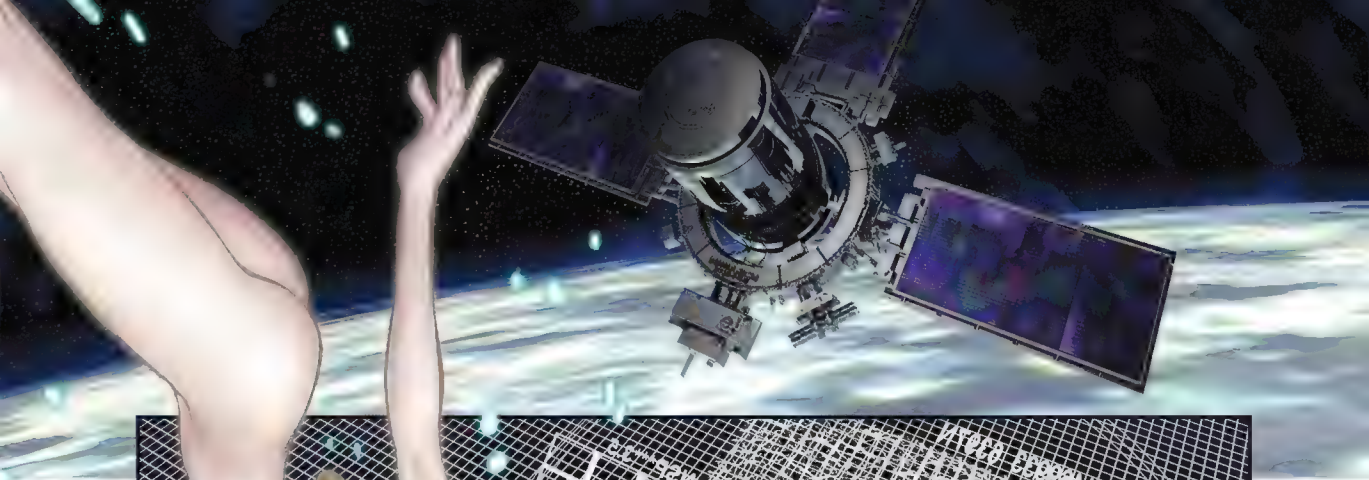


SUPPRESS, BLOCK, THEN STAND BY. NOW!!





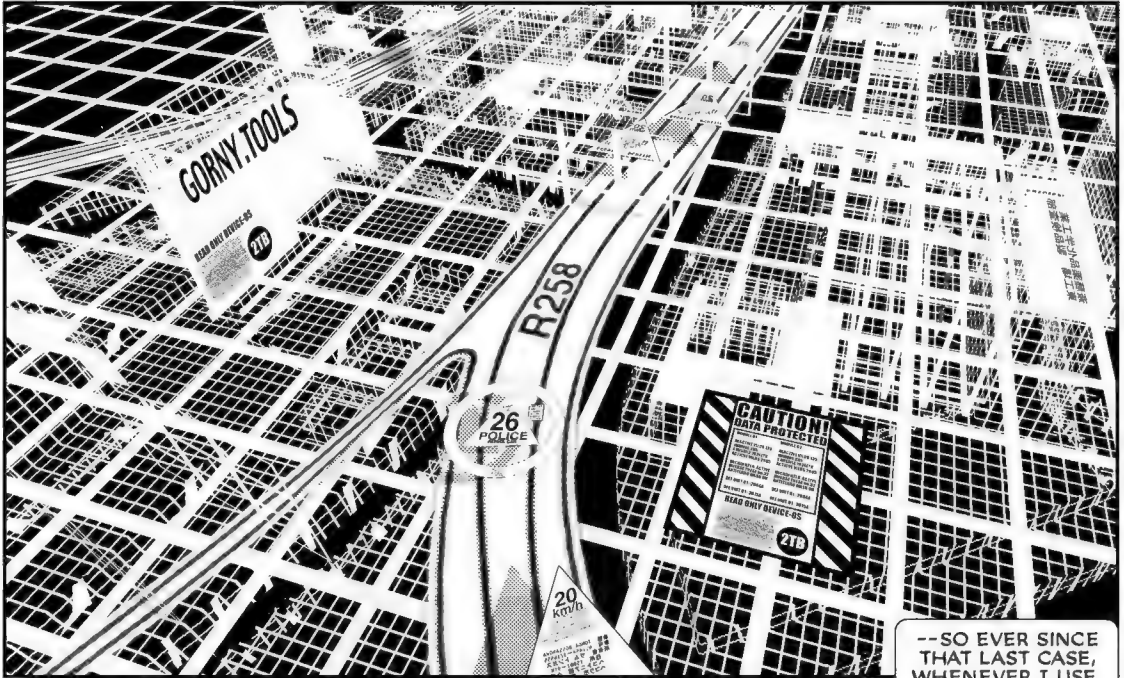




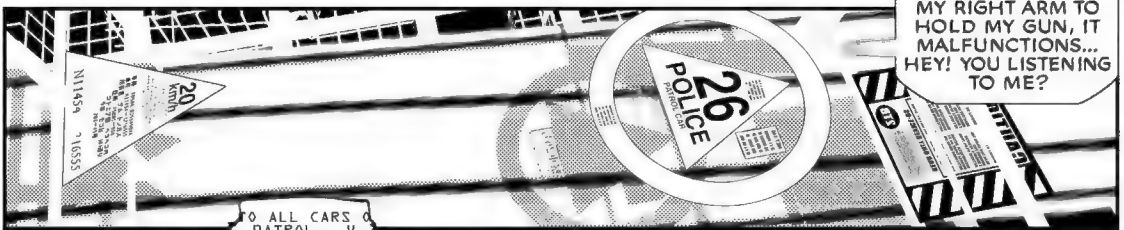
THE ONLY DECOT
I HAVE IN THIS
AREA IS FIFTY
MILES AWAY...
GREAT... JUST
WONDERFUL.



HMM...
I NEED
TO FIND A
USABLE BODY
CLOSER TO
THE TARGET
SITE...



--SO EVER SINCE THAT LAST CASE, WHENEVER I USE MY RIGHT ARM TO HOLD MY GUN, IT MALFUNCTIONS... HEY! YOU LISTENING TO ME?



TO ALL CARS OF PATROL...V. 094 IS RELEASE REPEAT 3094 IS RELEASED



YEAH, YEAH. YOU CHECK FOR NEW SOFTWARE PATCHES...?

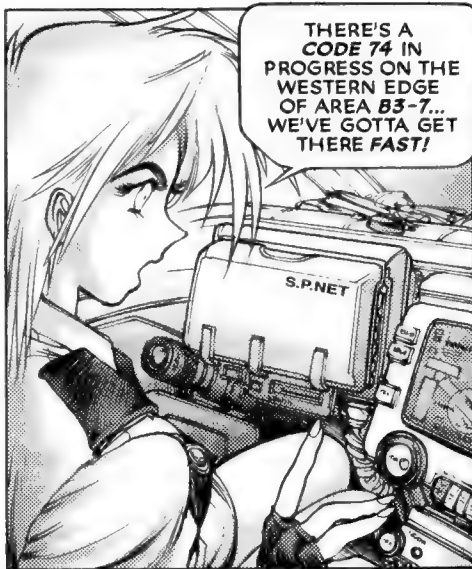


YOU WANT TO HEAR ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME I TRIED TO UPGRADE MY PROSTHETIC BODY CONTROL SOFTWARE? WHAT A TRAIN WRECK!



HEY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! GIMME BACK CONTROL!!

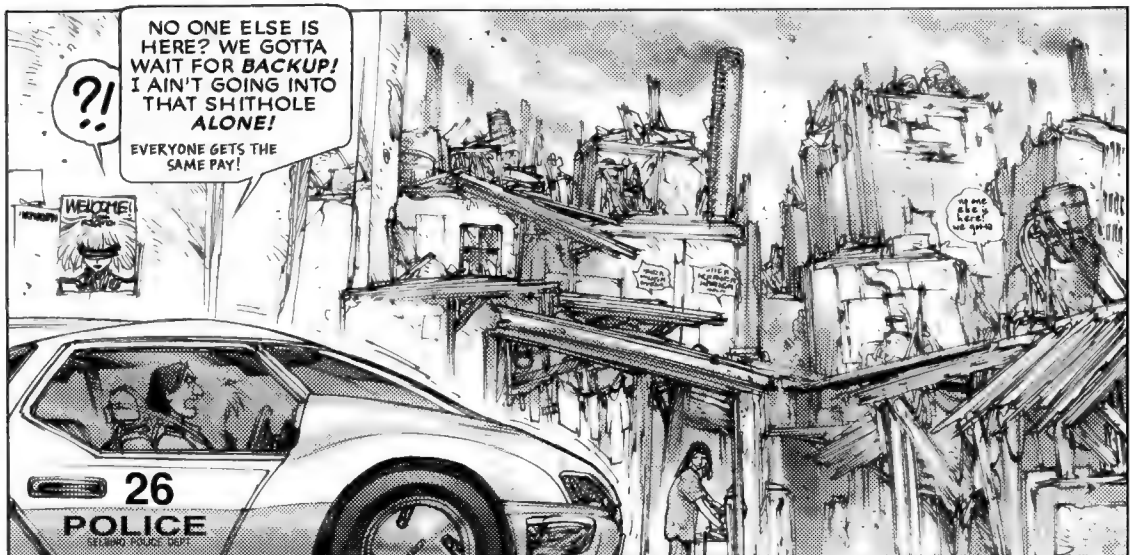




THERE'S A
CODE 74 IN
PROGRESS ON THE
WESTERN EDGE
OF AREA B3-7...
WE'VE GOTTA GET
THERE FAST!



B3-7?!
WHO THE
HELL'D CALL
IN A CODE 74
FROM THAT
STINKIN'
SLUM?!



NO ONE ELSE IS
HERE? WE GOTTA
WAIT FOR **BACKUP!**
I AIN'T GOING INTO
THAT SHITHOLE
ALONE!
EVERYONE GETS THE
SAME PAY!



HEY?!
WHAT--

BTAM

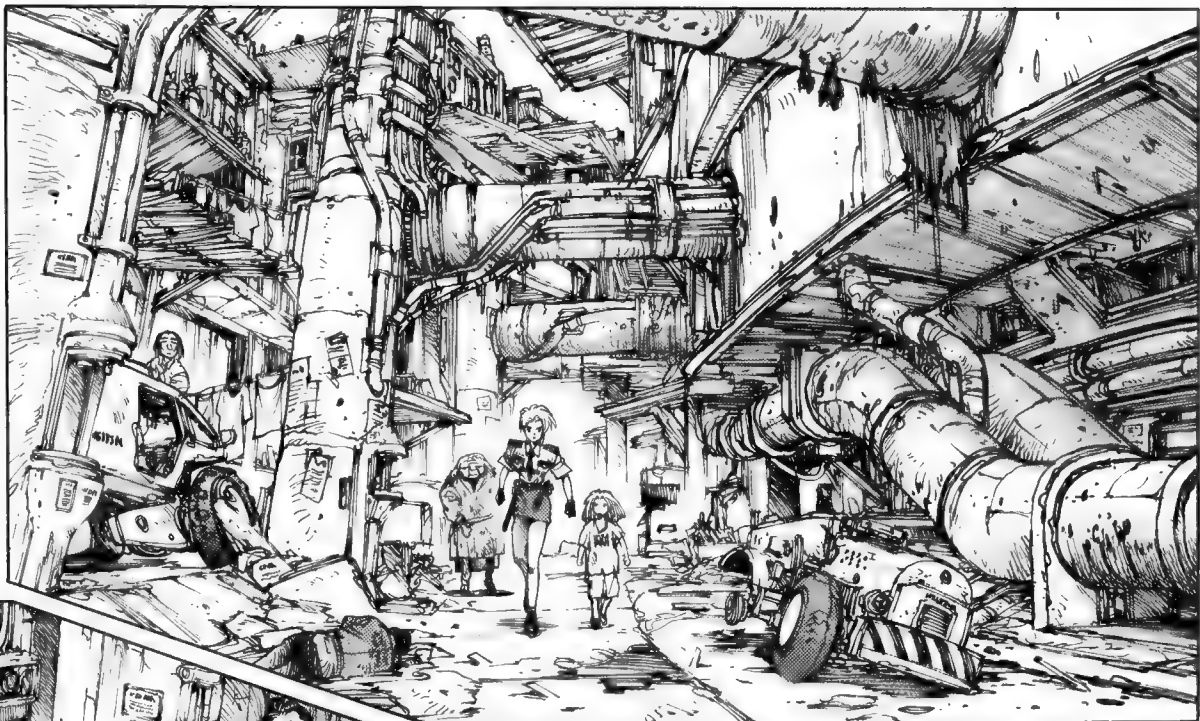


DAMN IT!
THIS IS WHY
I HATE
WORKING
WITH
CYBORGS!

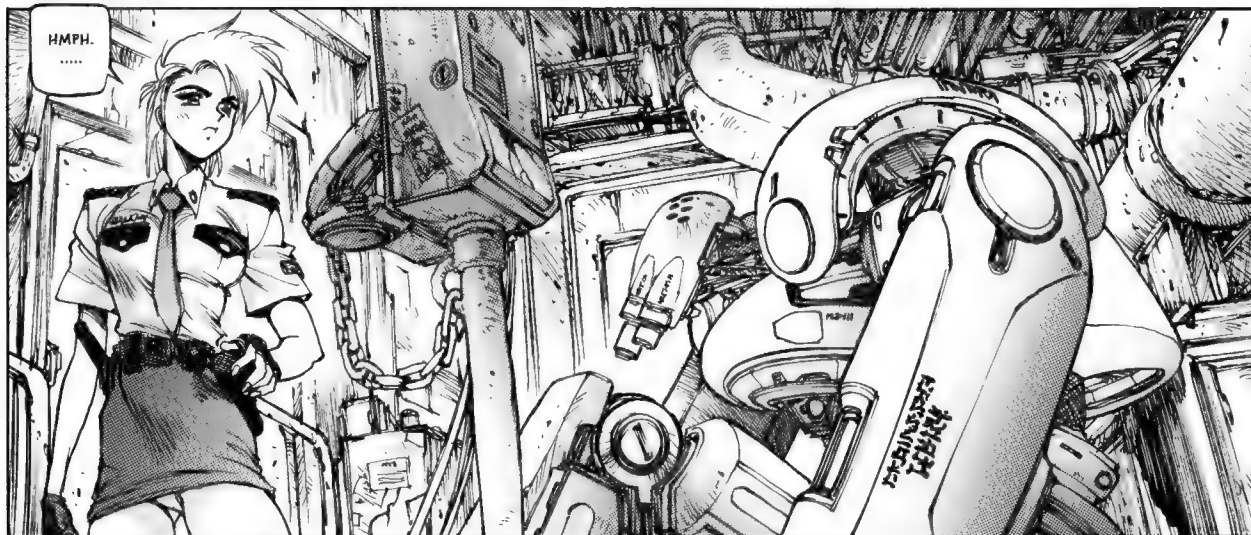
KCHIK
CODE ACCEPTED.
VEHICLE LOCKED

YO!!
WAIT
FOR
ME!!

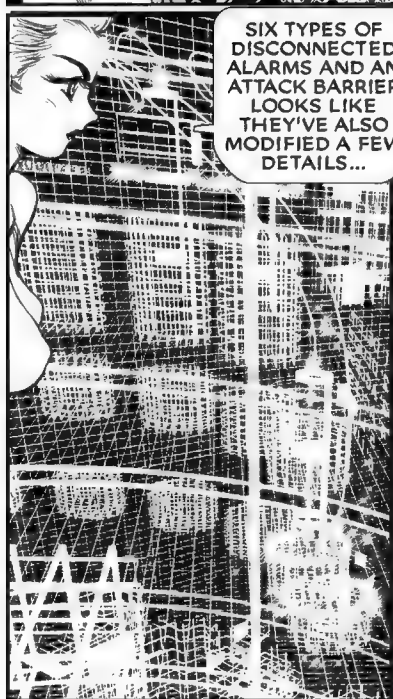
What? No solar panels on the outside of an electric car? You say some even already have 'em? Well, I suppose even a "water car" with fuel cells that electronically break down water to gain hydrogen could use them. Hmm...got to give some more thought to the external texturing of my near-future cars....



In recent years the media's been talking about a "digital divide," the gap growing between those who can and do use computers and those who can't or won't (ah, you say you know all about this?). But there's another type of digital divide, and that revolves around electronic information; information that has or hasn't been digitized. In this context we've got to be extra careful when people start tossing around terms like "I.T." and watch out for malignant, misleading, and downright false information, not to mention viruses!



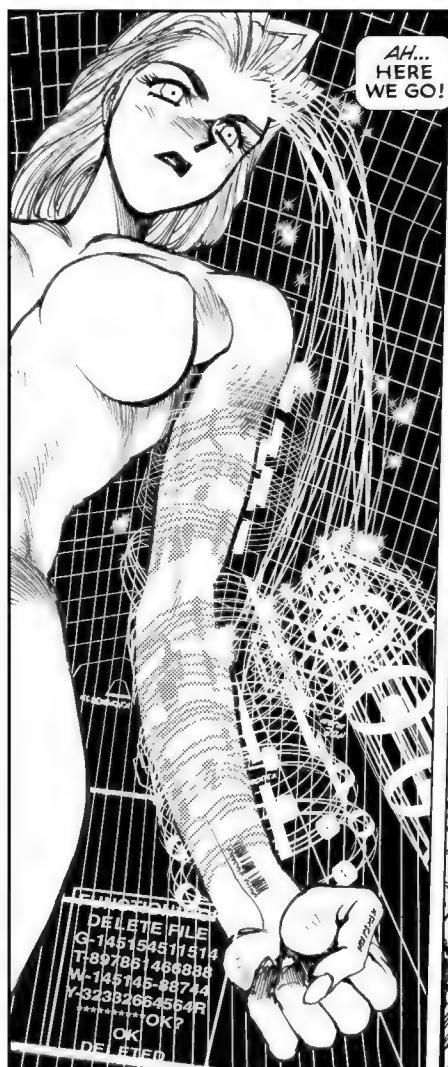
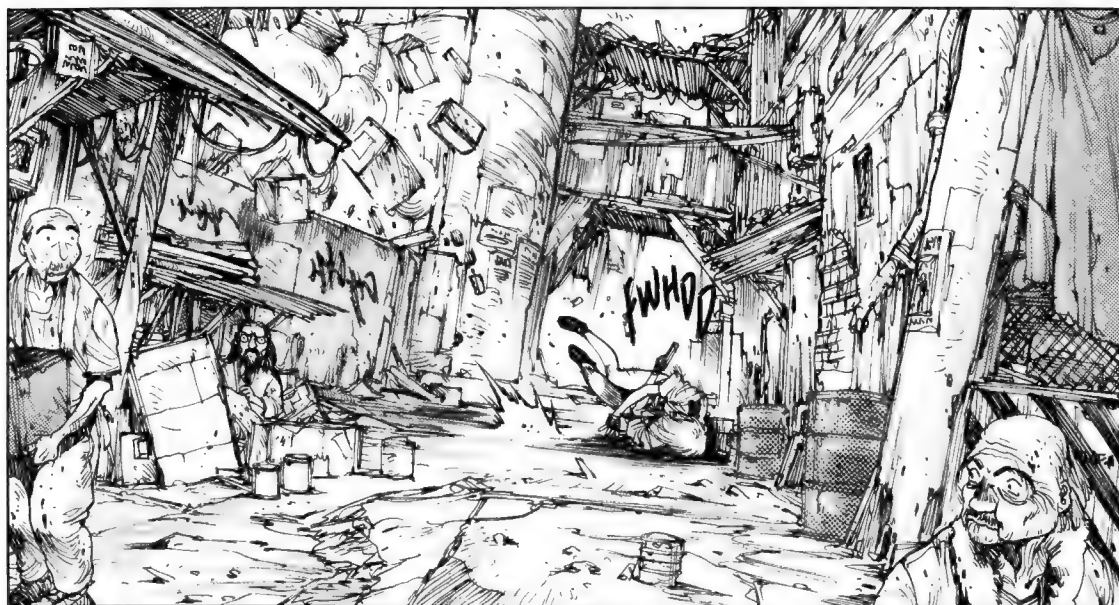


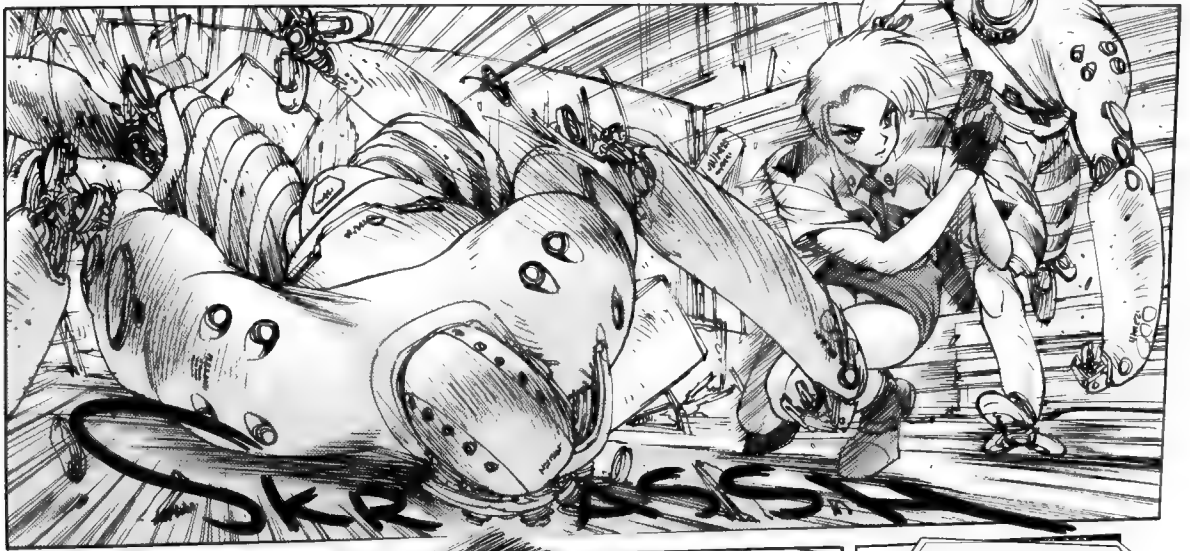




FIVE DIFFERENT FIRE-
CONTROL SOFTWARE
VERSIONS INSTALLED...?
NO WONDER THERE'S
A FUNCTIONAL
CONFLICT...!



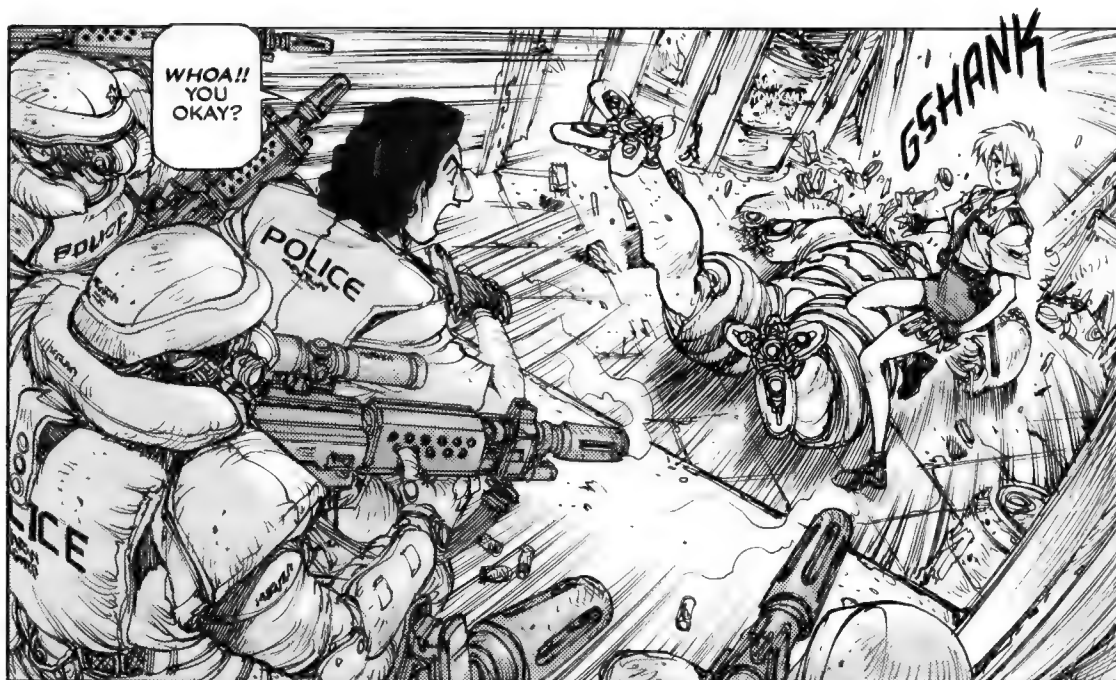




NOW...THIS ONE
I'LL JUST DISABLE.
THEN I CAN
ANALYZE IT AND
MAYBE IT'LL LEAD
ME TO ITS MASTER.
OR TO THE NEXT TRAP...

DANGER





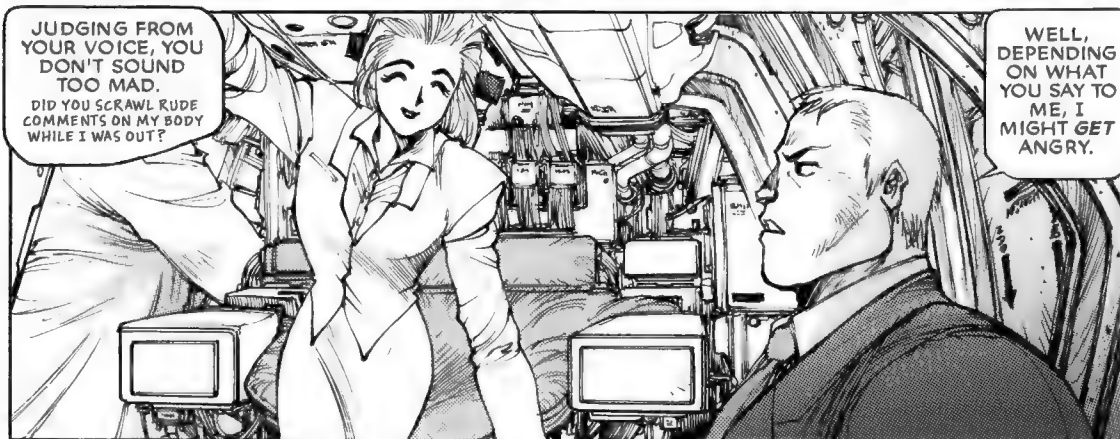
Since this is a comic I couldn't depict the movements right, but the guys (or gals) wearing protector suits feel like they're half-covered in a fungus like "athlete's foot," and their movements feel "hiccupy." VIPs wearing bulletproof vests also have similar problems, apparently.



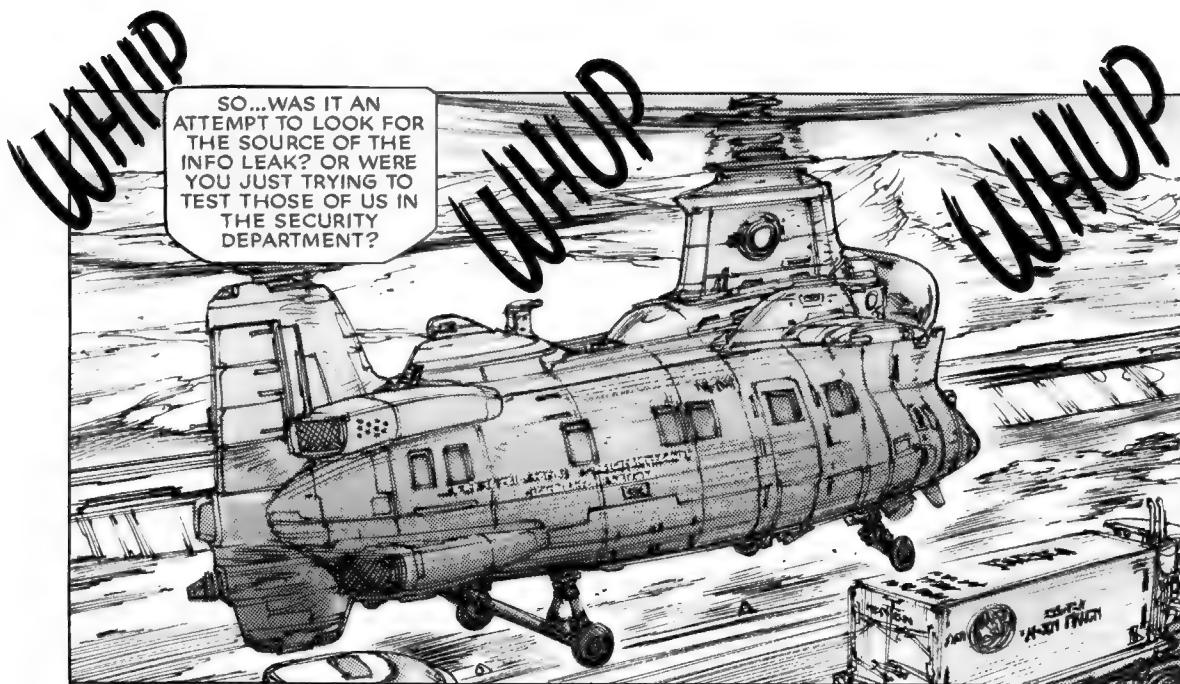
GOOD. BRING THE TEST NOTES AND THE BODY HERE. AND CHECK FOR ANY BACK-TRACES.



THERE WASN'T ANY GOOD REASON TO SAY NO, THAT'S ALL. DON'T BLAME HIM.



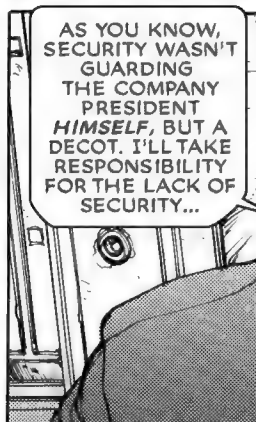
WELL, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU SAY TO ME, I MIGHT GET ANGRY.



SO...WAS IT AN ATTEMPT TO LOOK FOR THE SOURCE OF THE INFO LEAK? OR WERE YOU JUST TRYING TO TEST THOSE OF US IN THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT?



HEY, WE'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES HERE. MY DEPARTMENT IS WAY TOO BUSY TO "TEST" PEOPLE.



AS YOU KNOW, SECURITY WASN'T GUARDING THE COMPANY PRESIDENT **HIMSELF**, BUT A DECOT. I'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LACK OF SECURITY...



...BUT DO YOU THINK THEY MIGHT'VE MADE THE PRESIDENT PUBLICLY LOOK LIKE HE'D BEEN KILLED JUST TO COVER SOMETHING UP?

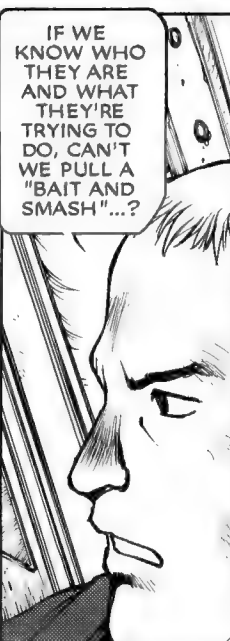


NO. THIS ENEMY'S GOT EXCELLENT SKILLS BUT POOR EXECUTION. BESIDES, THEY'RE **ULTRA** SUSPICIOUS.

SO THEY WOULDN'T USE THAT APPROACH.

VREE beep!

ALSO, THEY'RE NOT AFTER THE PRESIDENT. WE SHOULDN'T TIP OUR HAND UNTIL WE SEE HOW THEY PLAN TO PLAY THIS.



IF WE KNOW WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY'RE TRYING TO DO, CAN'T WE PULL A "BAIT AND SMASH"...?



NO, WE NEED TO CONFIRM THE DEGREE OF SECURITY SYSTEM EROSION, CONCENTRATE ON OUR OWN CORE DEFENSES, AND COMPENSATE FOR OUR LATE START IN ALL THIS. THE ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT WAS BAIT PUT OUT FOR US BY THE ENEMY.

WE SIMPLY NEED MORE TIME BEFORE WE CAN MOVE TO TAKE THEM OUT CLEANLY.

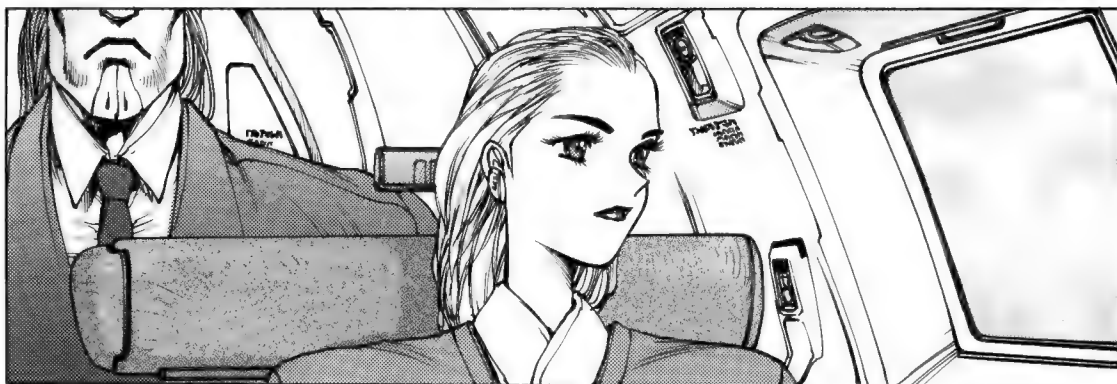


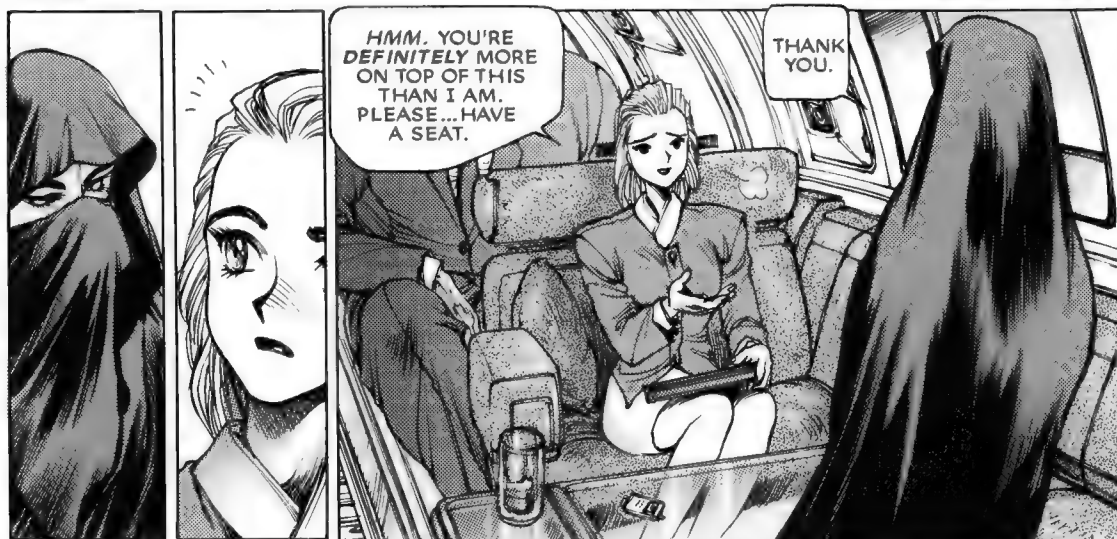
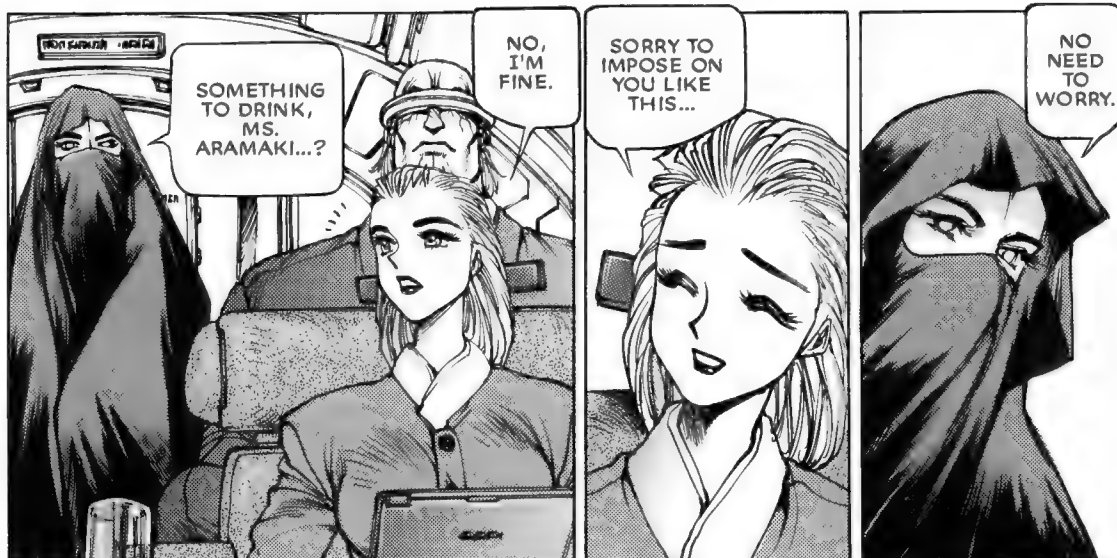


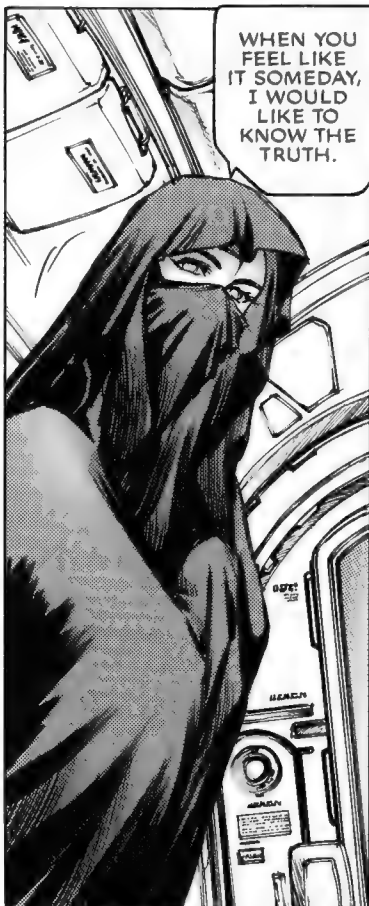
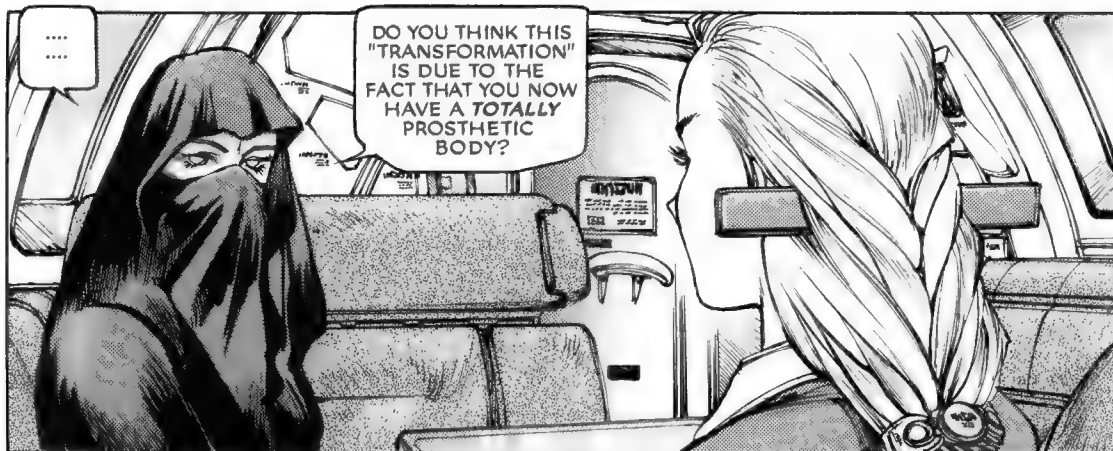
GIMNY 30: Name of a prosthetic body control software.
"30" indicates it's the fiscal 2030 version.



This book was originally published in 2001, which the Japanese government declared the "First Year of the I.T. Era." While a tad slow out of the gate, they're apparently going to promote digitalization and English education. Of course, if we're really going to promote this in our rapidly aging society, we'd probably be better off investing in R&D for multi-language translation software (as they're apparently doing at the U.N.) or subsidizing R&D on super-simple user interfaces...but are we doing so? Or doing enough? Or even getting any results?



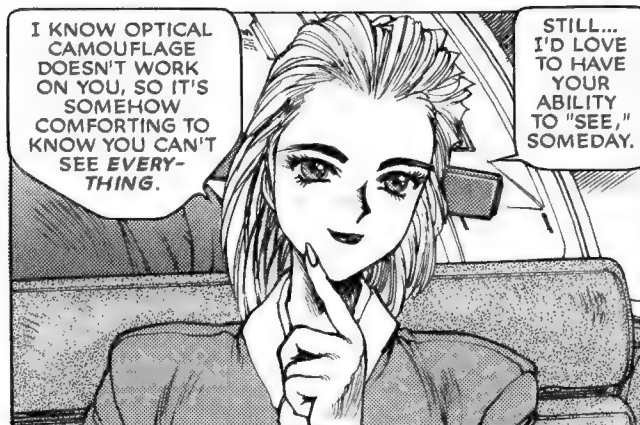






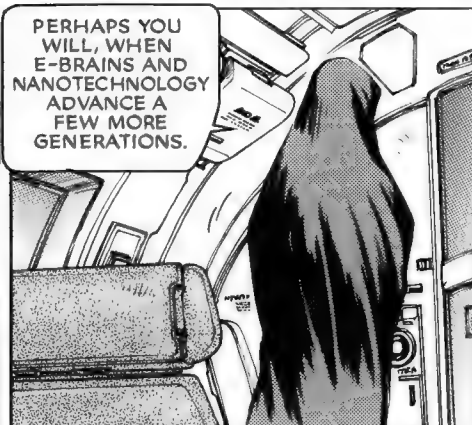
THE STARS ARE MOVING, BUT I CANNOT SEE HIS FORM.

YET SOMETIMES I CANNOT SEE YOUR FORM, EITHER.



I KNOW OPTICAL CAMOUFLAGE DOESN'T WORK ON YOU, SO IT'S SOMEHOW COMFORTING TO KNOW YOU CAN'T SEE EVERYTHING.

STILL... I'D LOVE TO HAVE YOUR ABILITY TO "SEE," SOMEDAY.



PERHAPS YOU WILL, WHEN E-BRAINS AND NANOTECHNOLOGY ADVANCE A FEW MORE GENERATIONS.

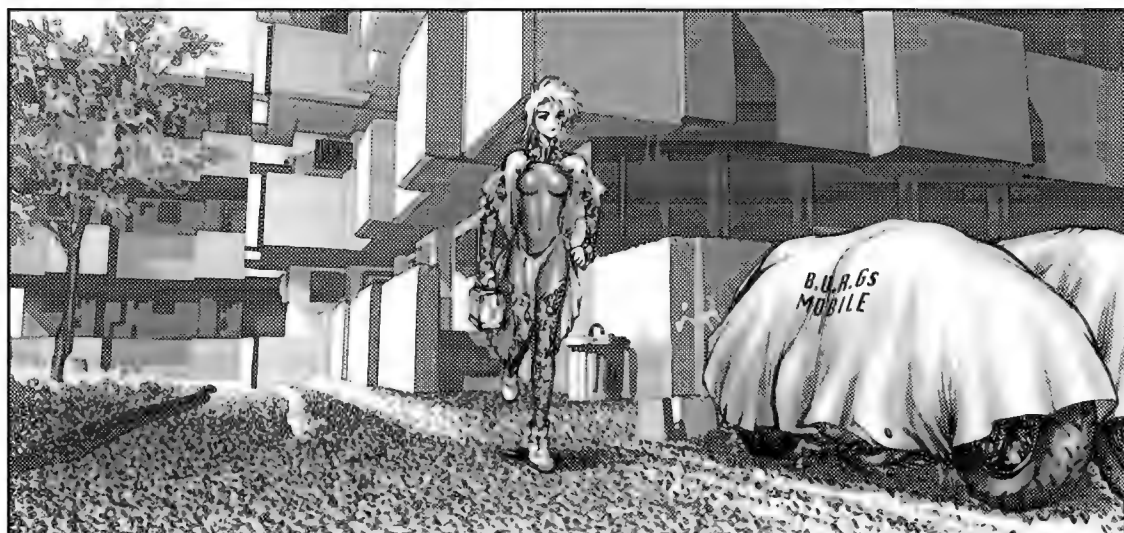
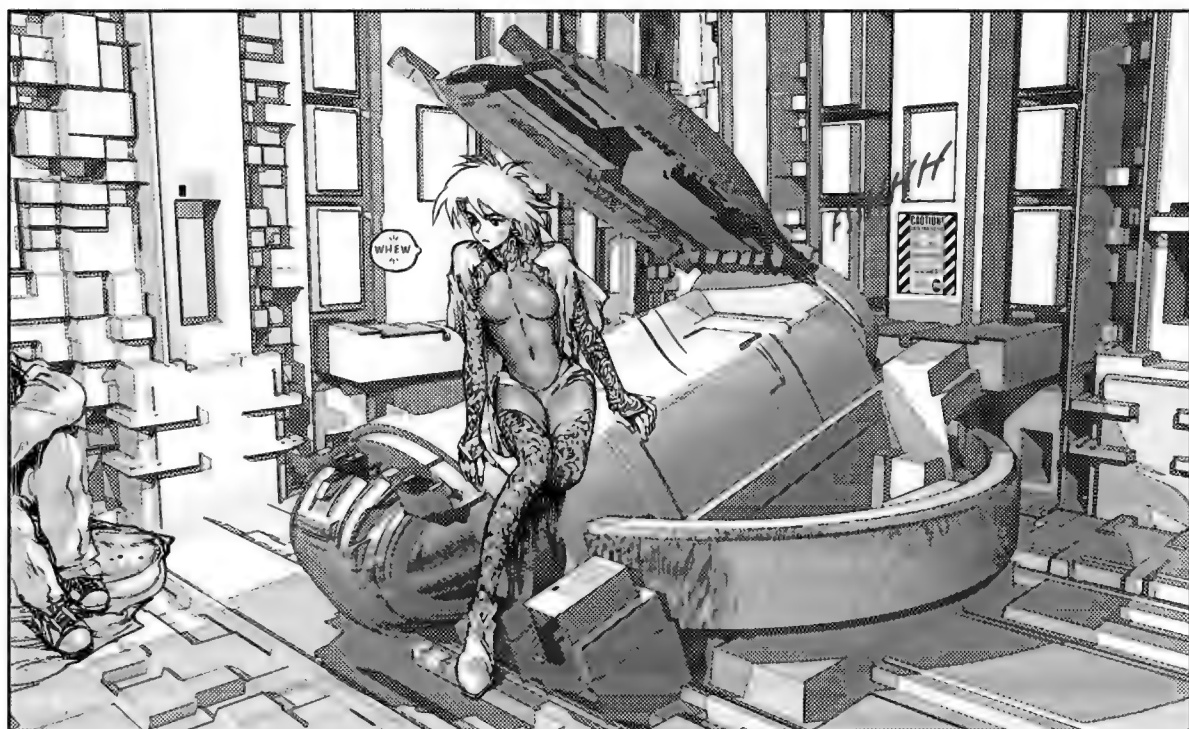


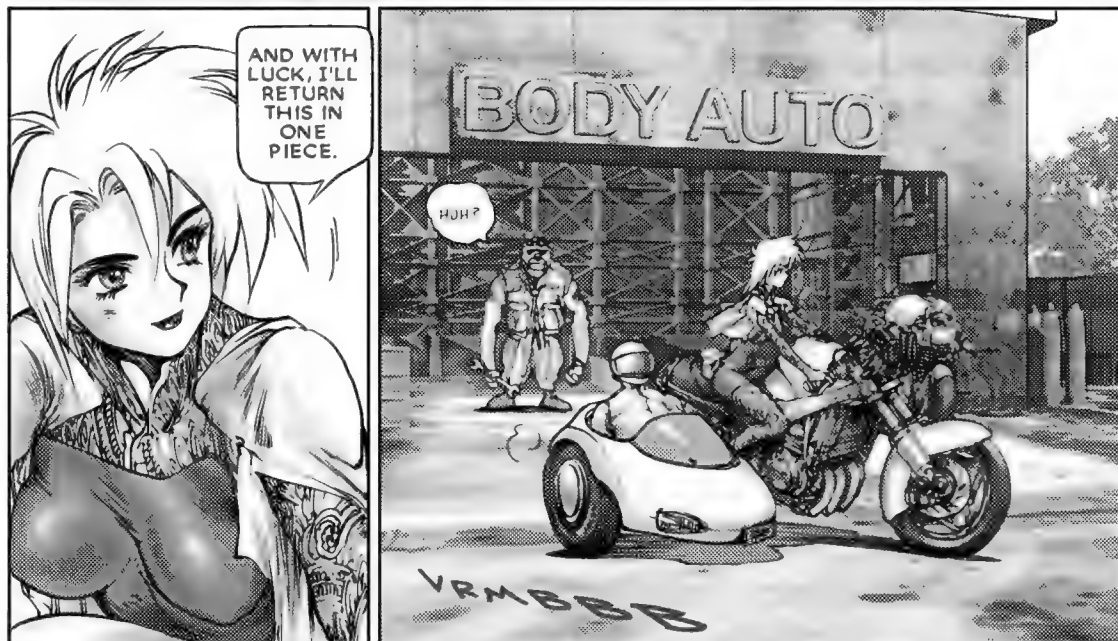
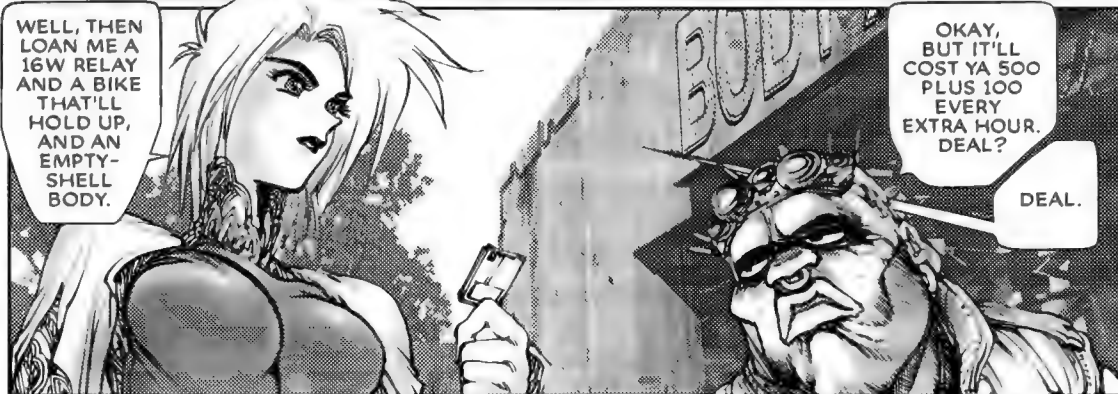
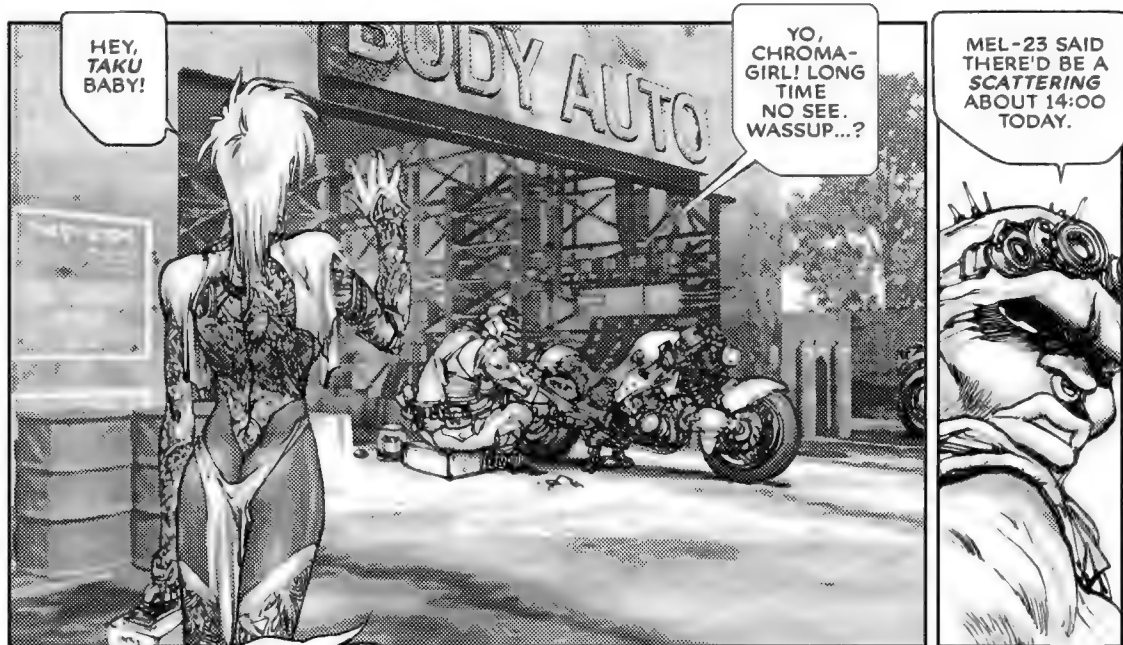
WE COMPLETED THE SATELLITE V-DELTA. THE ITEM IN QUESTION IS CURRENTLY OVER THE SKIES OF MANILA IN ONE OF NANKAI EXPRESS'S PLANES. WE'VE ACTIVATED THE DECOT CALLED CHROMA FOR YOU.

GOOD. TAKE CARE OF MY BODY. AFTER WE ARRIVE AT TPE, EXECUTE DIRECTIVE ARRAY 2-C. MAKE SURE I HAVE AIR/GROUND TRANSPORT TO THE SAFE HOUSE. USE ASSUMED NAME "K."

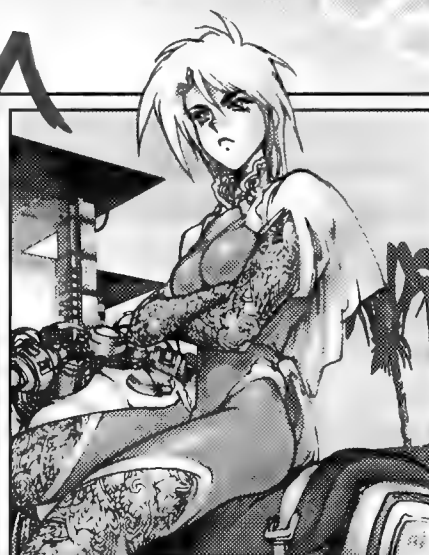


TPE: Code for Chiang Kai-Shek Airport in Taiwan.

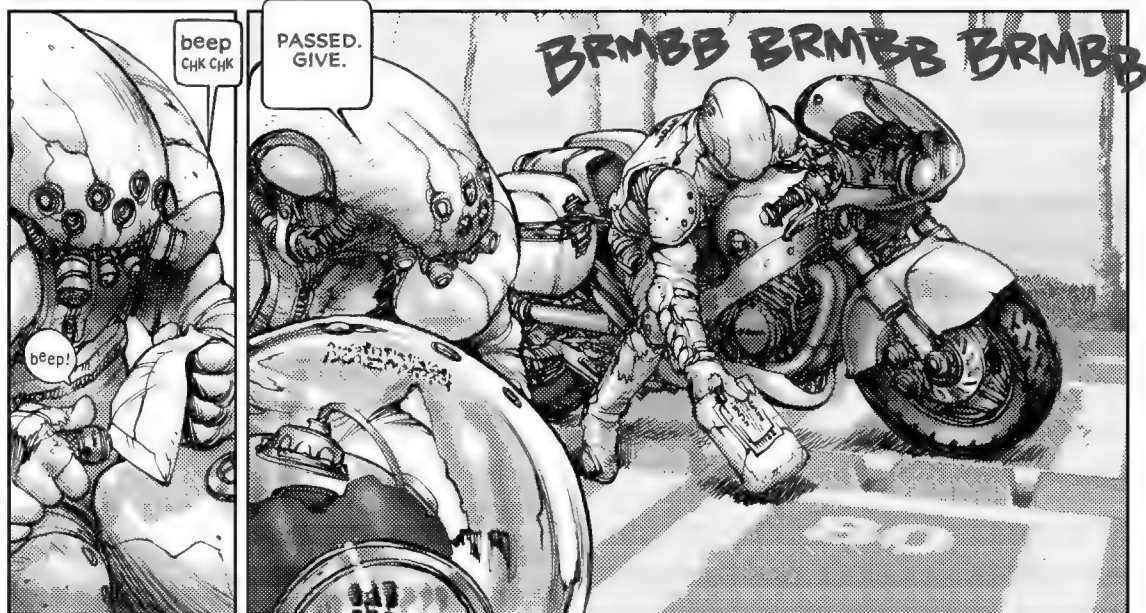
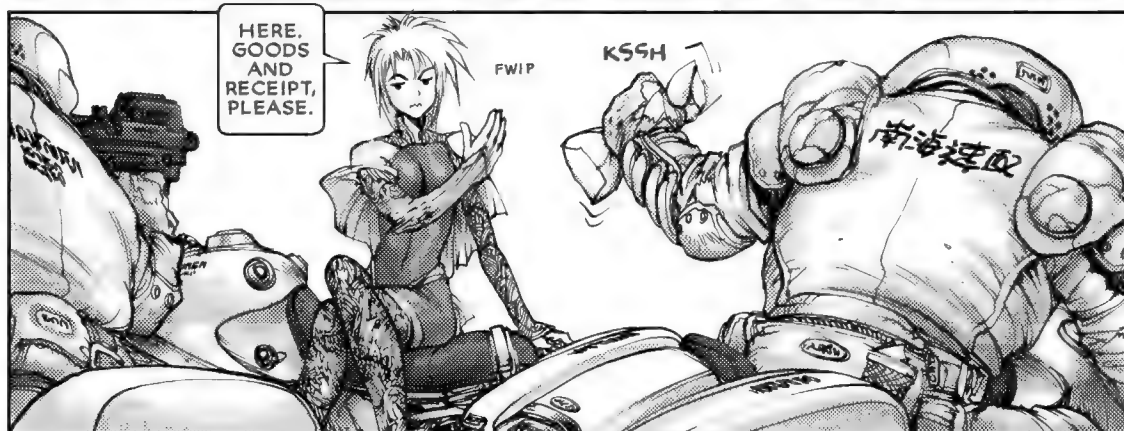
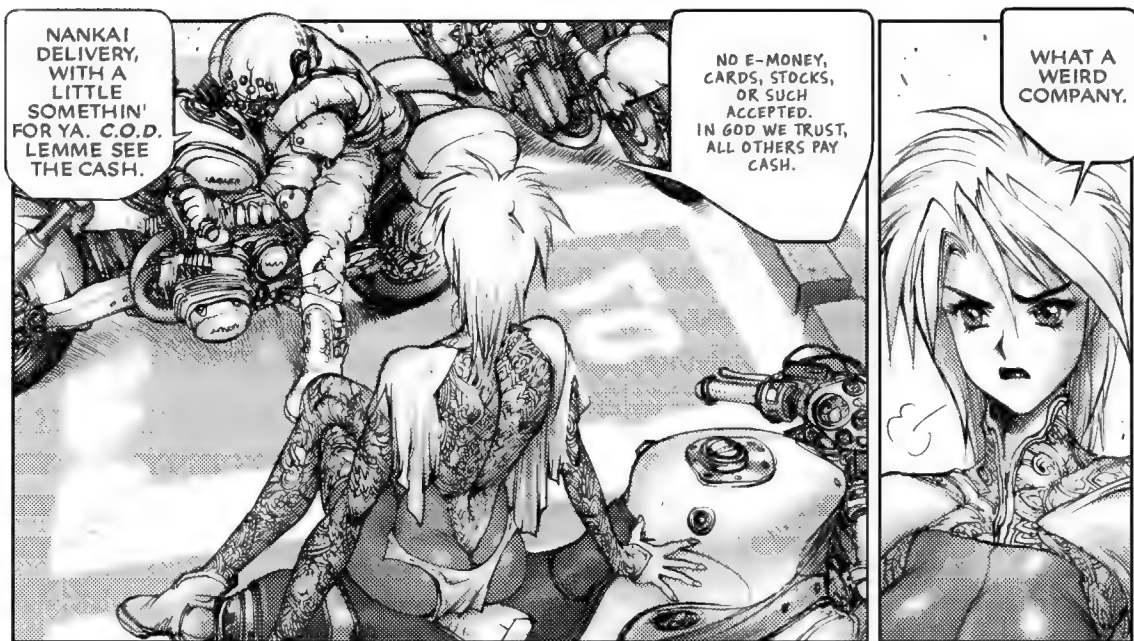


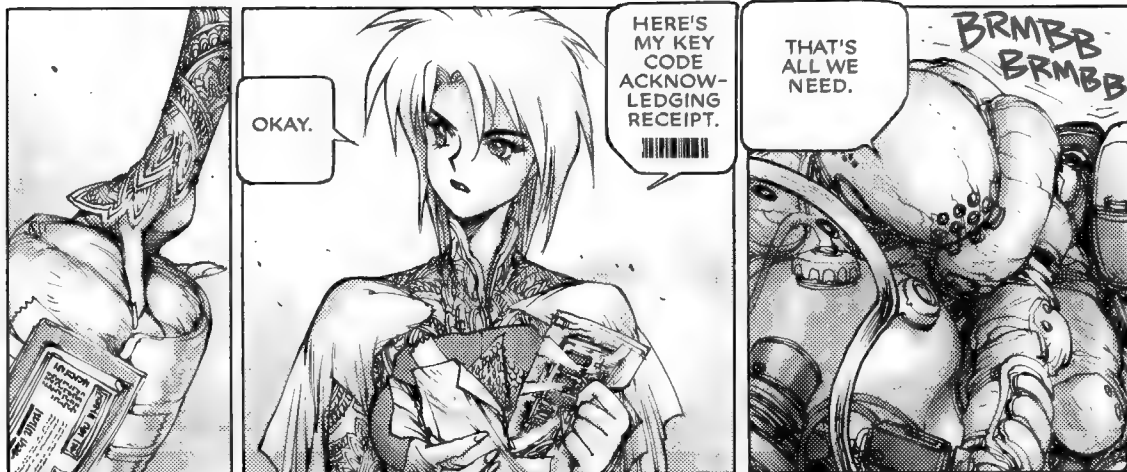


"Scattering" in this case refers to a scattering of radio waves coming in via satellite.



I don't really know if internal combustion engines will still be around by the time of this story, but I decided to draw them because they're easier to understand than silent electric engines. One selling point for electric vehicles is that they're quieter, but it seems to me that it'd be dangerous for them to be completely silent, especially in the city. Perhaps I'm worrying too much? The details on the bikes don't have much connection to reality. Forgive me, bike lovers!





OKAY.

HERE'S MY KEY CODE ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT.

THAT'S ALL WE NEED.

BRMBB
BRMBB



HEY, HEY!
HOW ABOUT A
"THANKS FOR
YOUR
BUSINESS"...?!



HEH...NOW WE'LL
SEE HOW MUCH
THIS WILL HELP
CONTROL
THINGS...



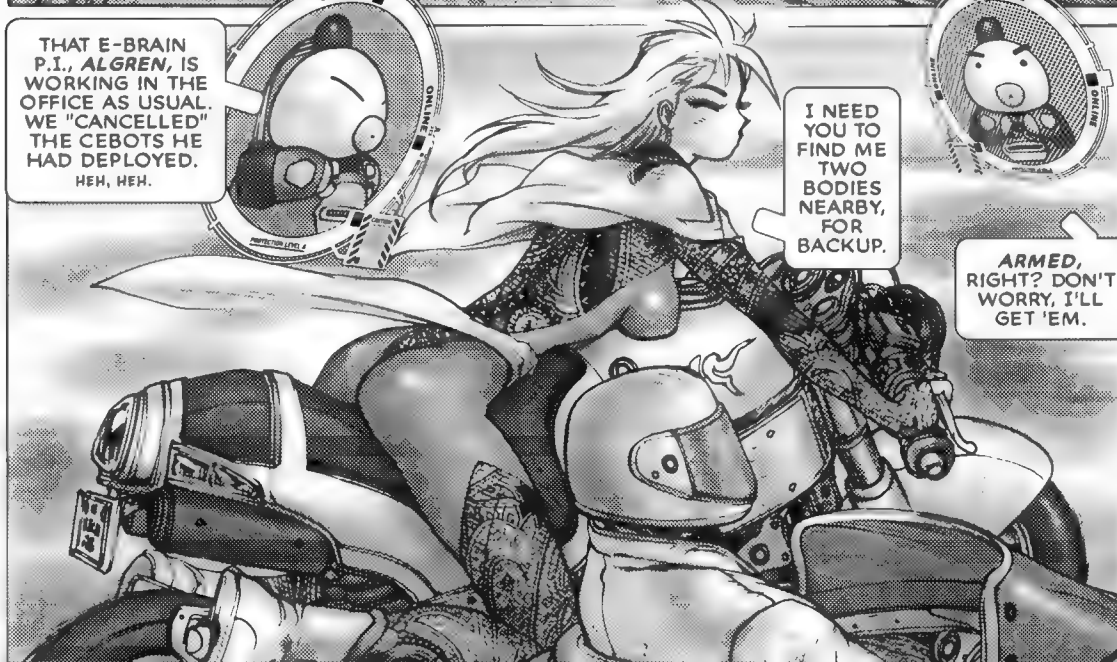
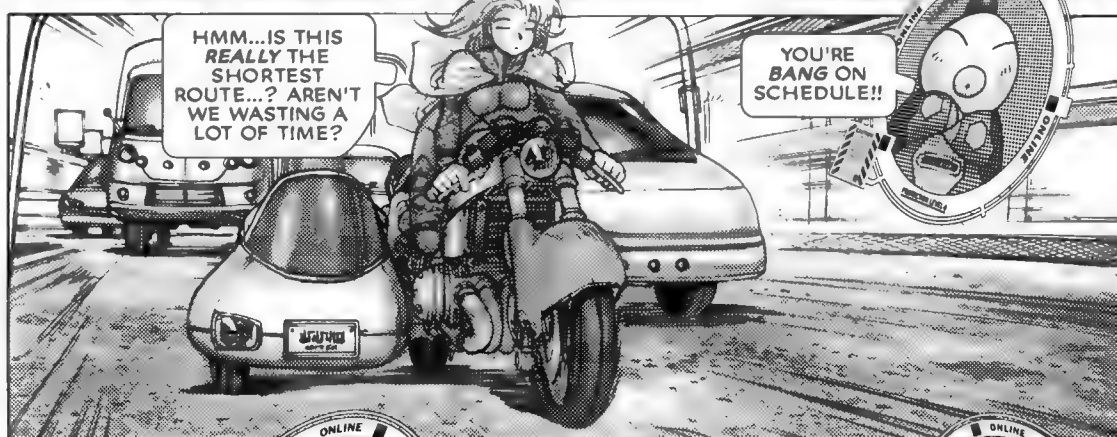
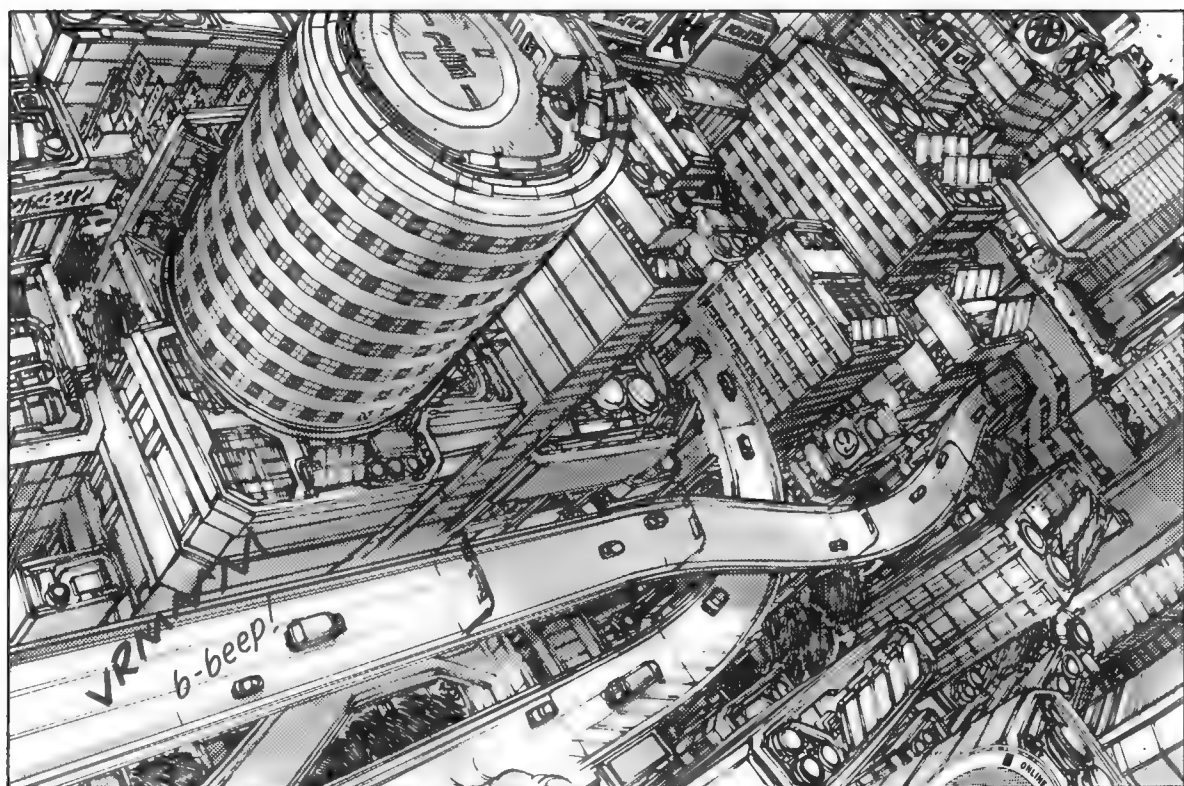
WHAT?! YOU REALLY
DON'T REMEMBER
SHIPPING ANYTHING
WITH NANKAI
DELIVERY? YOU
CAN'T EVEN TELL
YOUR MEMORY'S
BEEN ERASED?

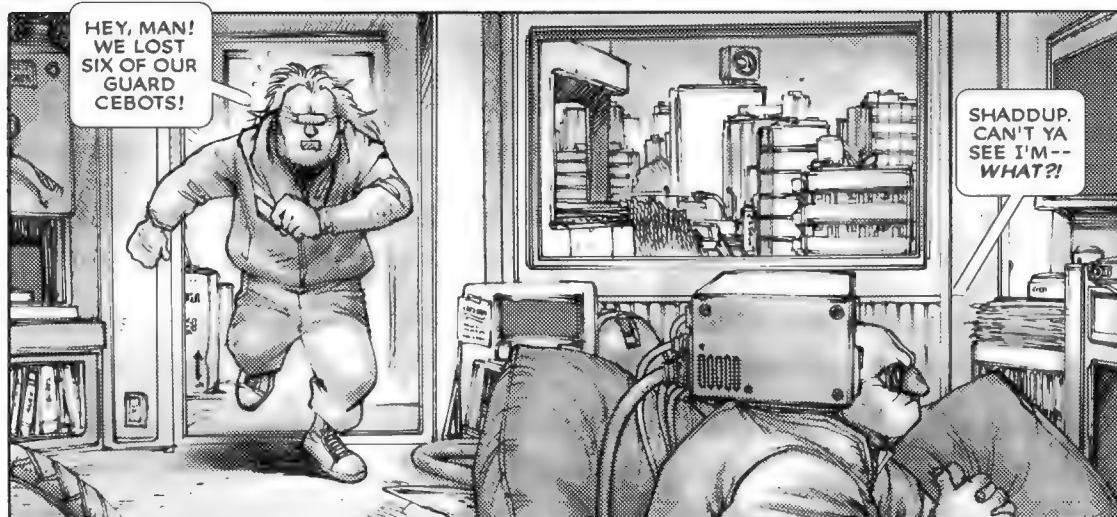
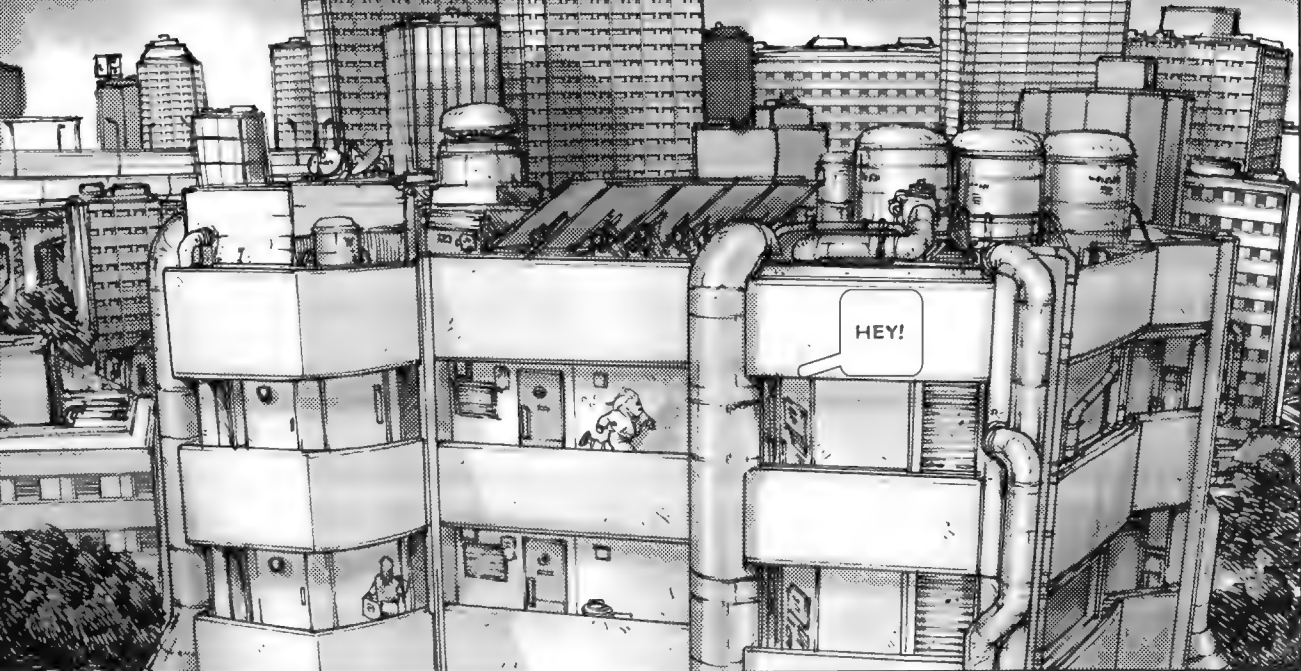
I TOLD YOU--WHEN
I CAME TO, ALL I
KNEW WAS THAT
MY BODY CONTROL
SOFTWARE'D BEEN
CLEANED UP, AND I
FELT MUCH BETTER!
THAT'S ALL!!

THAT'S
WHY
E-BRAINS
SCARE
ME...

CREEPY!

To improve the security of computers, the easiest thing is to *not* connect them to a network. But that's not a very good solution for most people, because they can't afford *not* to connect. In the near future we'll probably be inundated by networked household appliances, or I.T. appliances, and we'll need really good anti-virus strategies for them. Those who have appliances with heating elements or lots of family information stored in them will have to be especially careful. Somehow it scares me to think of card-keys and fingerprint readers being used on my front door. So get to work, all you experts out there, I'm depending on you! (And how about running a network over the existing electrical wiring in a home? Does it really work? Is it safe?)



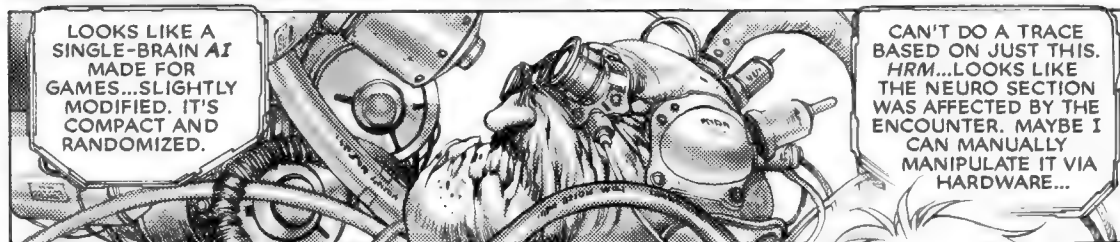






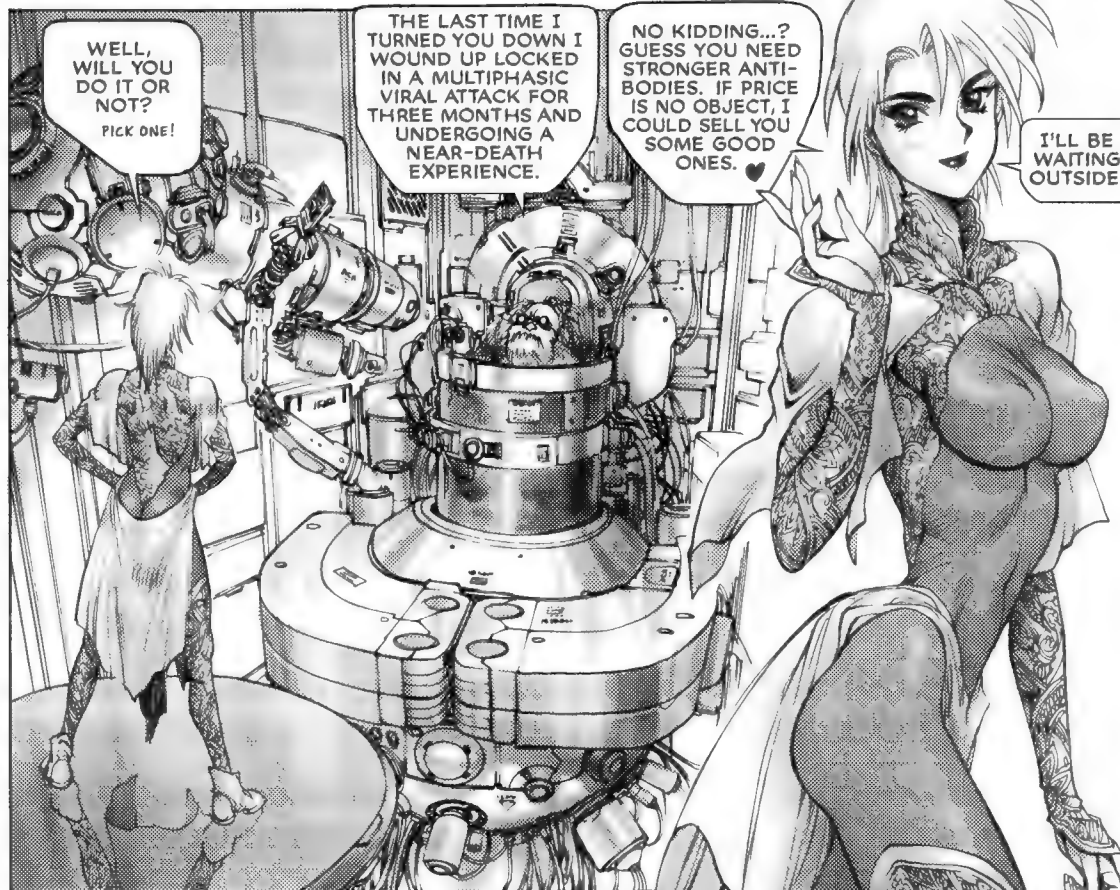
LOOKS LIKE
THE INPUT'S
FROM A WIRED
PUBLIC TERMINAL.
SO IT CAN'T BE
TRACED FROM
E-PRINTS.

NO ROM
RESIDUALS,
NO CONFLICT
FRAGMENTS...
HRM.



LOOKS LIKE A
SINGLE-BRAIN AI
MADE FOR
GAMES...SLIGHTLY
MODIFIED. IT'S
COMPACT AND
RANDOMIZED.

CAN'T DO A TRACE
BASED ON JUST THIS.
HRM...LOOKS LIKE
THE NEURO SECTION
WAS AFFECTED BY THE
ENCOUNTER. MAYBE I
CAN MANUALLY
MANIPULATE IT VIA
HARDWARE...

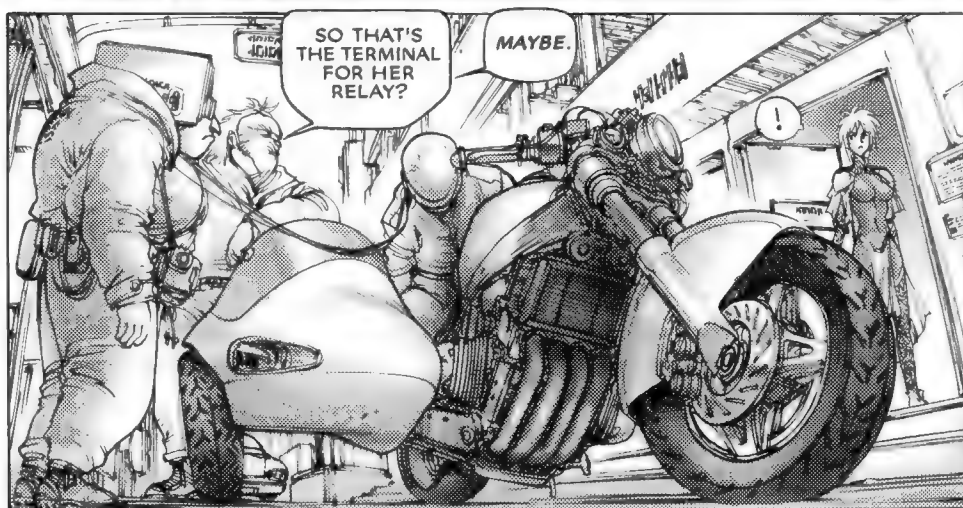
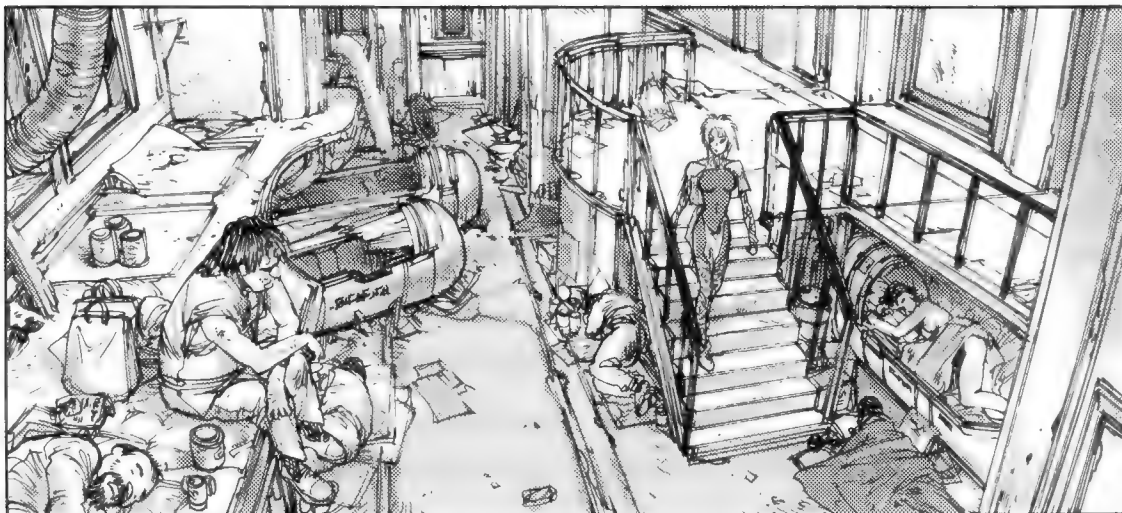


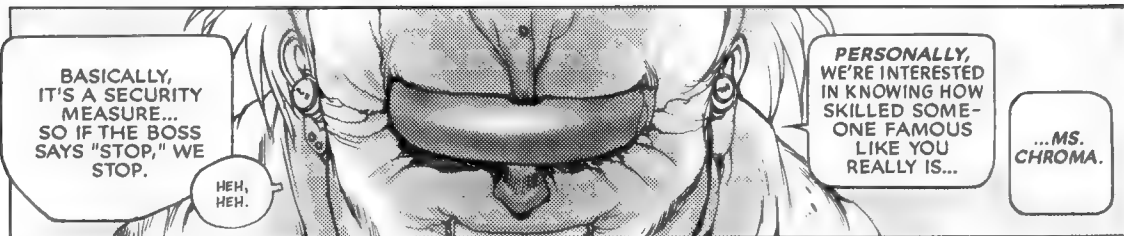
WELL,
WILL YOU
DO IT OR
NOT?
PICK ONE!

THE LAST TIME I
TURNED YOU DOWN I
WOUND UP LOCKED
IN A MULTIPHASIC
VIRAL ATTACK FOR
THREE MONTHS AND
UNDERGOING A
NEAR-DEATH
EXPERIENCE.

NO KIDDING...?
GUESS YOU NEED
STRONGER ANTI-
BODIES. IF PRICE
IS NO OBJECT, I
COULD SELL YOU
SOME GOOD
ONES. ♥

I'LL BE
WAITING
OUTSIDE.



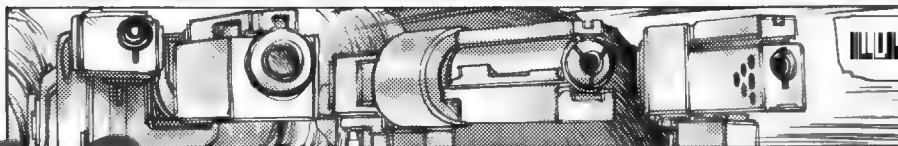


BASICALLY,
IT'S A SECURITY
MEASURE...
SO IF THE BOSS
SAYS "STOP," WE
STOP.

HEH,
HEH.

PERSONALLY,
WE'RE INTERESTED
IN KNOWING HOW
SKILLED SOME-
ONE FAMOUS
LIKE YOU
REALLY IS...

...MS.
CHROMA.



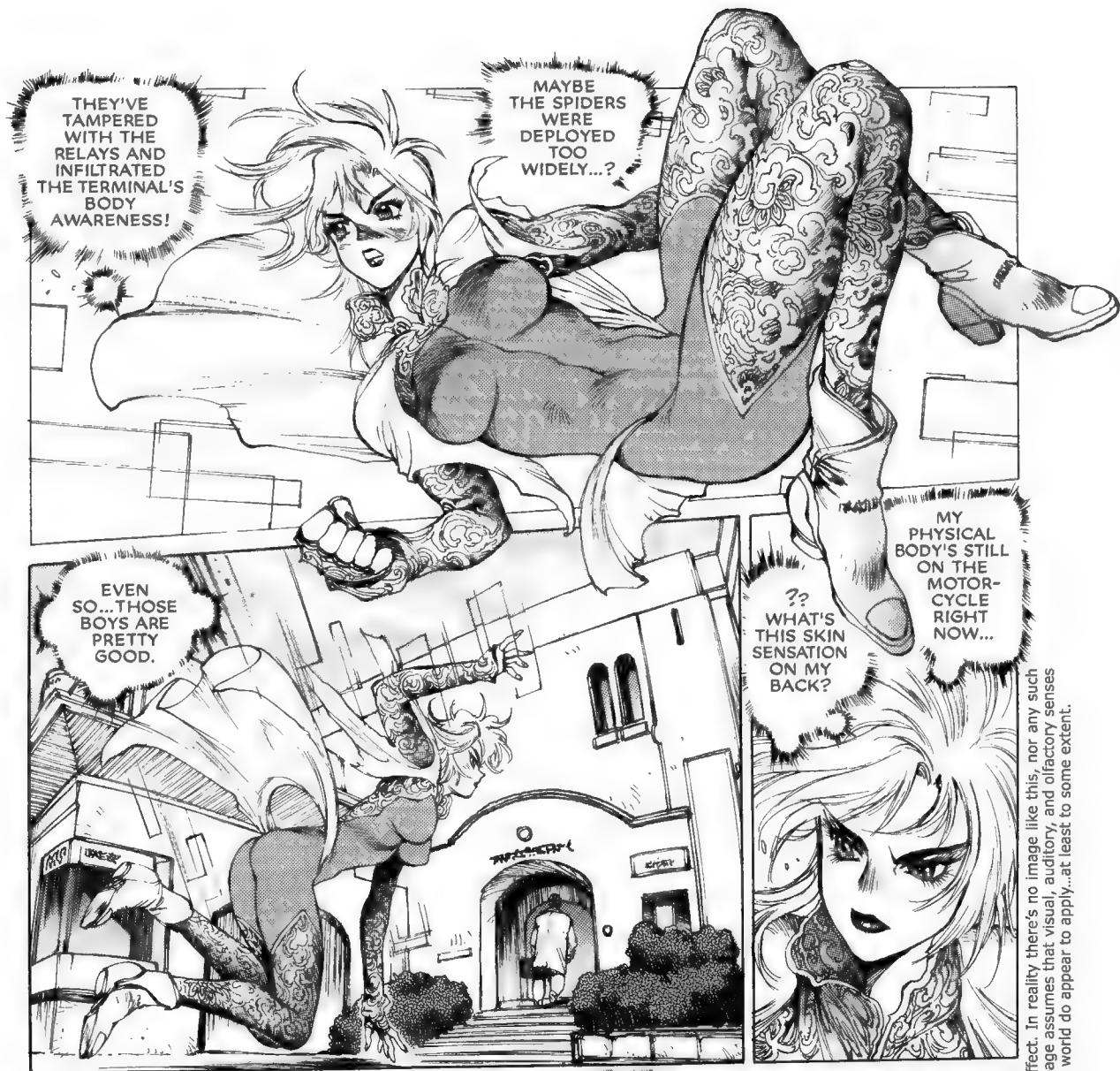
AN IMAGE?!
SHE'S
INFILTRATED
OUR
OPTICS?!

SHE GOT
THROUGH
FOUR
BARRIERS!

THE RUMORS
ARE TRUE...SHE
WORKS AS FAST
AS AN AI.

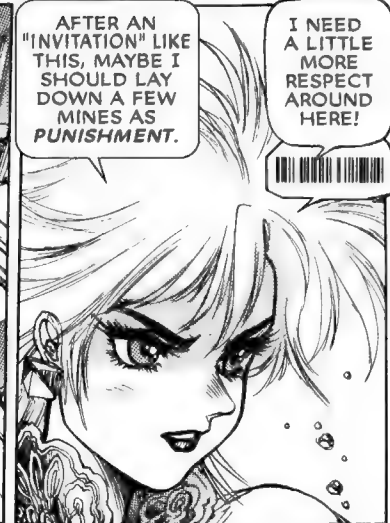
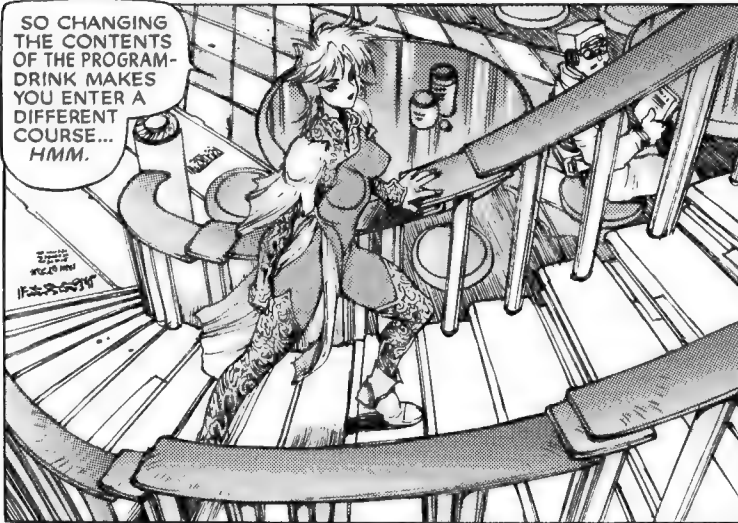
I MADE A RECORDING,
BUT IT'S GONNA BE
UNUSABLE...

By "fast," the man means the time it took her to find an access route, break through the barriers, infiltrate the target, and turn off the line.



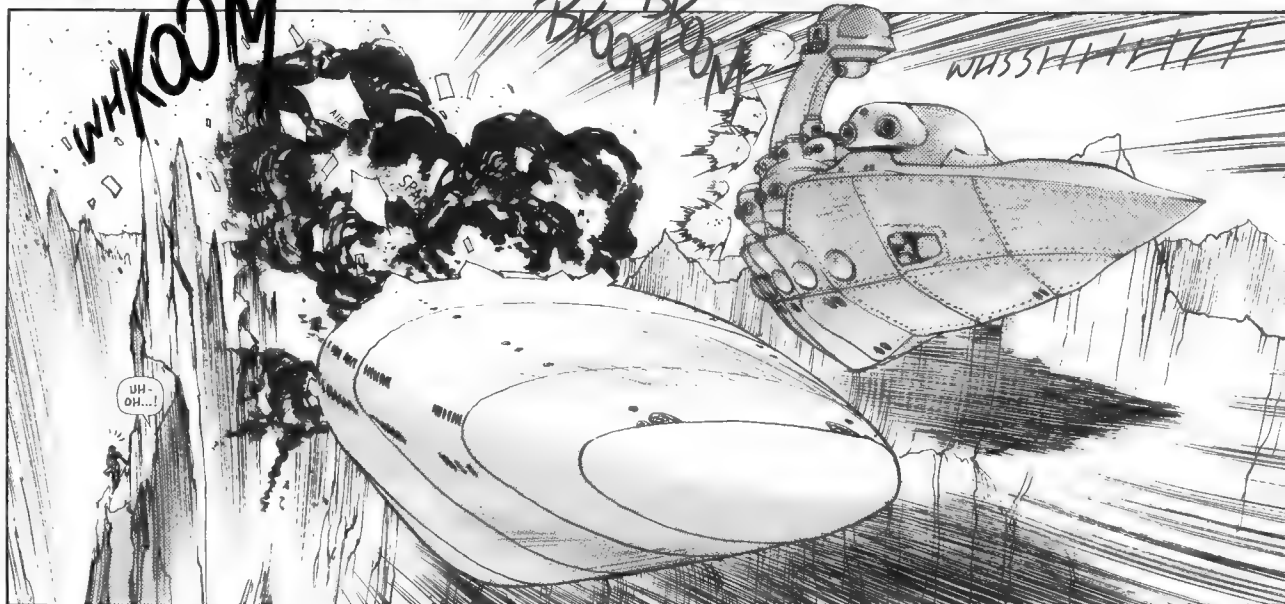
In this particular work, the e-brain matrix space is only drawn for effect. In reality there's no image like this, nor any such "space." But the "game program space" depicted beginning on this page assumes that visual, auditory, and olfactory senses have been made as real as possible and that the laws of the physical world do appear to apply...at least to some extent.





Based on the key for another course she analyzed and recorded earlier, Motoko has generated another course key and started executing a new program.





It's not clear here whether this is a scene from an RPG or a shooting game.



THAT'S WEIRD.
THERE'S NO
SIGN SHE
EVEN WENT
THROUGH
THIS SPECIAL
COURSE
START
ZONE...

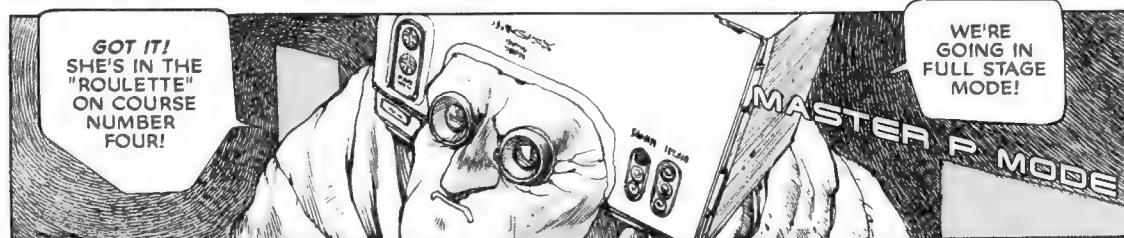
LET'S
SEARCH
FOR
HER.

I'LL MASK
US OUT
AND DO A
ONE-
MINUTE
REVERSE.



HEY,
THERE'S
NO BREAK
SIGN!

MAYBE SHE
CRACKED
THE KEY AND
SKIPPED TO
ANOTHER
INDEX...?



GOT IT!
SHE'S IN THE
"ROULETTE"
ON COURSE
NUMBER
FOUR!

WE'RE
GOING IN
FULL STAGE
MODE!

MASTER P MODE



HMM...
MAYBE
I'VE
BEEN
TAGGED...

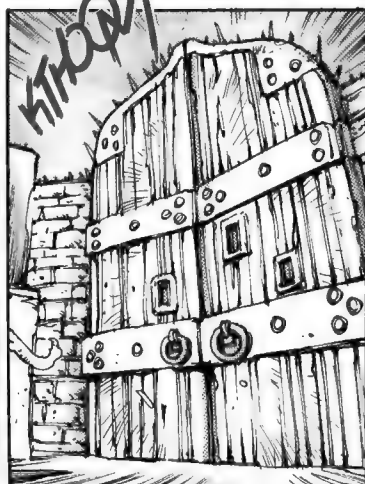


FILE 3159

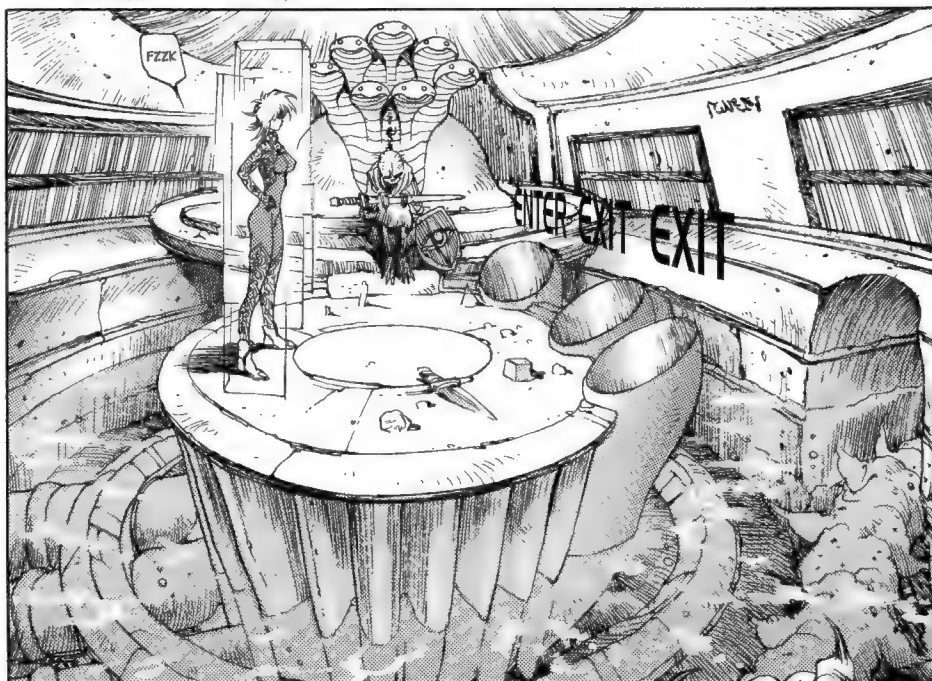
160

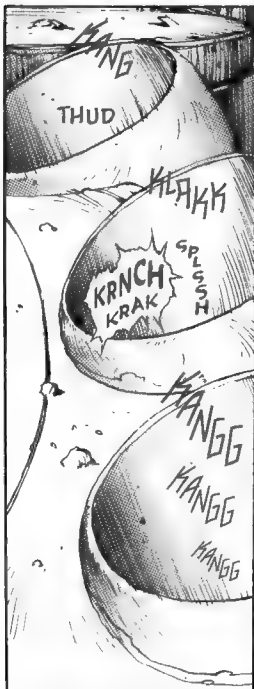
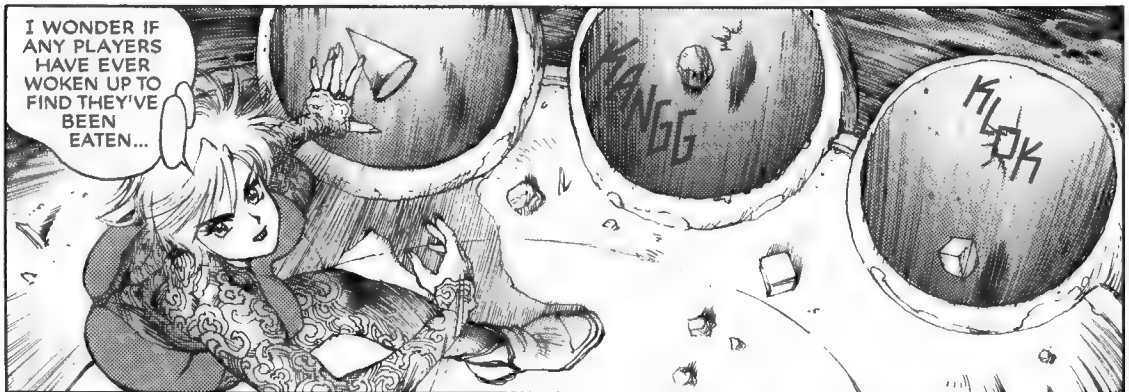


If you were the one who entered this stage instead of Chroma, what action would you take next? Choose from among the following: (1) Remain where you are for some reason or because you don't know what to do. (2) Go right for some reason. (3) Go straight for some reason. (4) Go left for some reason. (Note that left is the direction taken in the fifth panel, right is the seventh panel.) If you had only five seconds to decide, what would you do?



Motoko doesn't feel the effect, but normally there's a major emotion (fear or delight) included in the package. Players usually become involved with and experience this emotion.

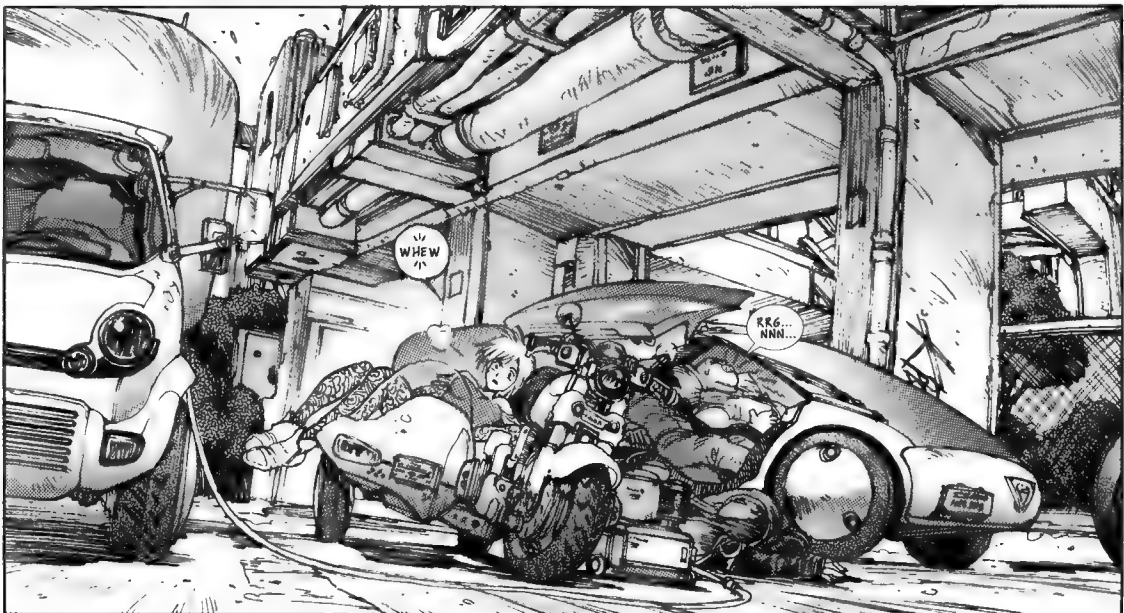




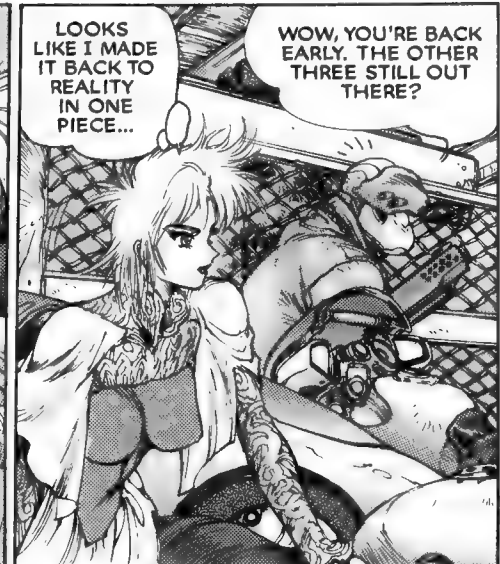
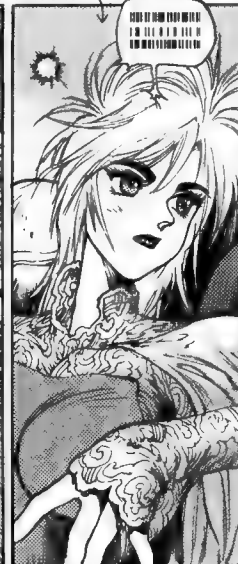
In this story, "waking up" refers to returning from cyberspace to reality. A totally mechanized cyborg like Chroma (who here is actually functioning as a remote terminal for Motoko) normally doesn't "wake up" as easily as a human with an e-brain.



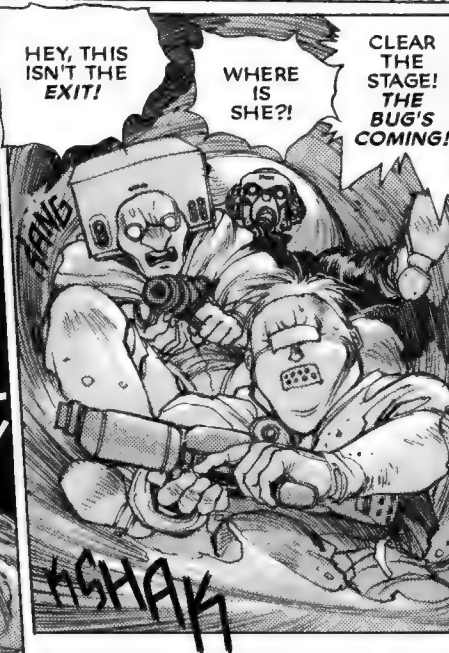
E-brain humans normally wake up sooner than cyborgs because their bodies make more independent demands on them (hunger, the desire to eliminate, sleep, or roll over at night due to poor circulation). Of course, these demands can be temporarily repressed using medication, but not indefinitely. Most people have experienced this, even if they don't have e-brains. Even when we're completely engrossed in video games, books, talking or creating something, sleep or hunger or poor circulation have the ability to interrupt what we're doing. At least for me. And you...?




CHECKS REAR VIEW MIRROR



Motoko has apparently been processing the signals coming from her leg and deceiving her own senses to think that her right leg is really a cylinder. By doing so, in cyberspace her leg has the sensation (visual and tactile) that it is a cylinder, but in reality, as shown in the above panel, it's of course just functioning as a leg, and is perceived as such. This gives her a quick way to tell if she is in fact in "reality" and not simply another iteration of cyberspace. (Doesn't sound very believable, does it...?)







SURE IS TAKING
A LONG
TIME FOR A
PRELIMINARY
INVESTIGATION...

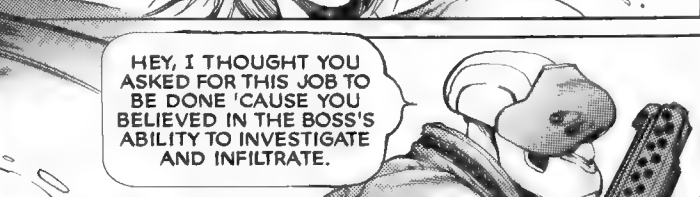


YEAH...
IT'S A
NEW
RECORD.




YOU DON'T
SUPPOSED THEY
WERE FRIED BY
AN ATTACK
BARRIER, DO
YOU?

IF I'VE BEEN TRACED
AND SURROUNDED,
MAKE SURE I'M
OUT OF THE WAY
BEFORE YOU
START SHOOTING,
OKAY?




HEY, I THOUGHT YOU
ASKED FOR THIS JOB TO
BE DONE 'CAUSE YOU
BELIEVED IN THE BOSS'S
ABILITY TO INVESTIGATE
AND INFILTRATE.



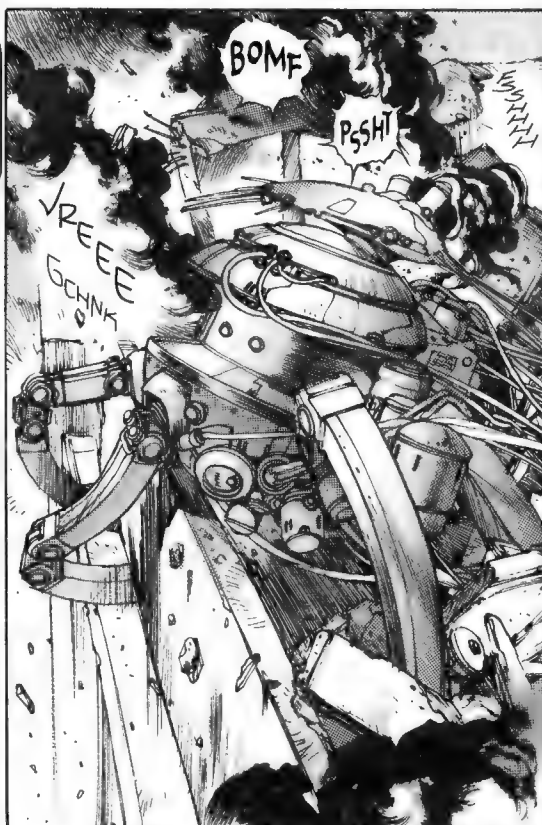
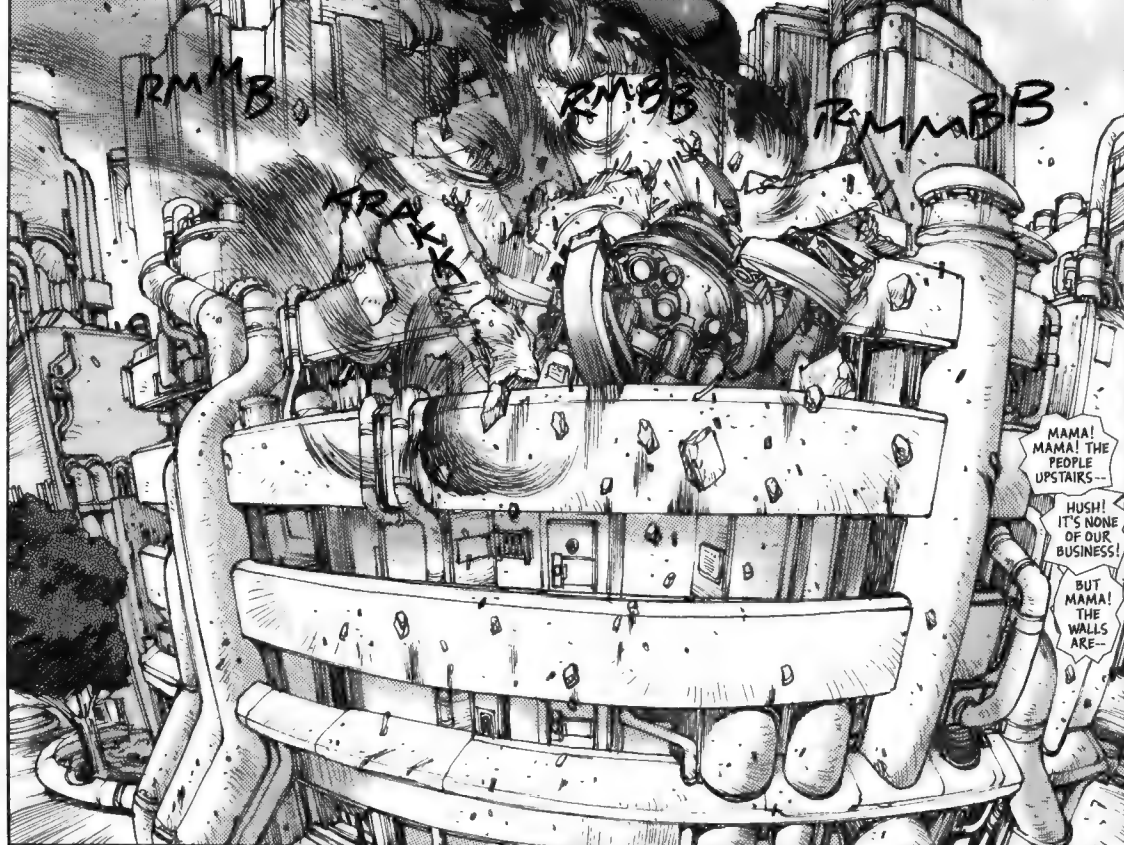
IF I HAD
100% FAITH,
I WOULDN'T
BE HERE IN A
BODY-TERMINAL
SURROGATE.

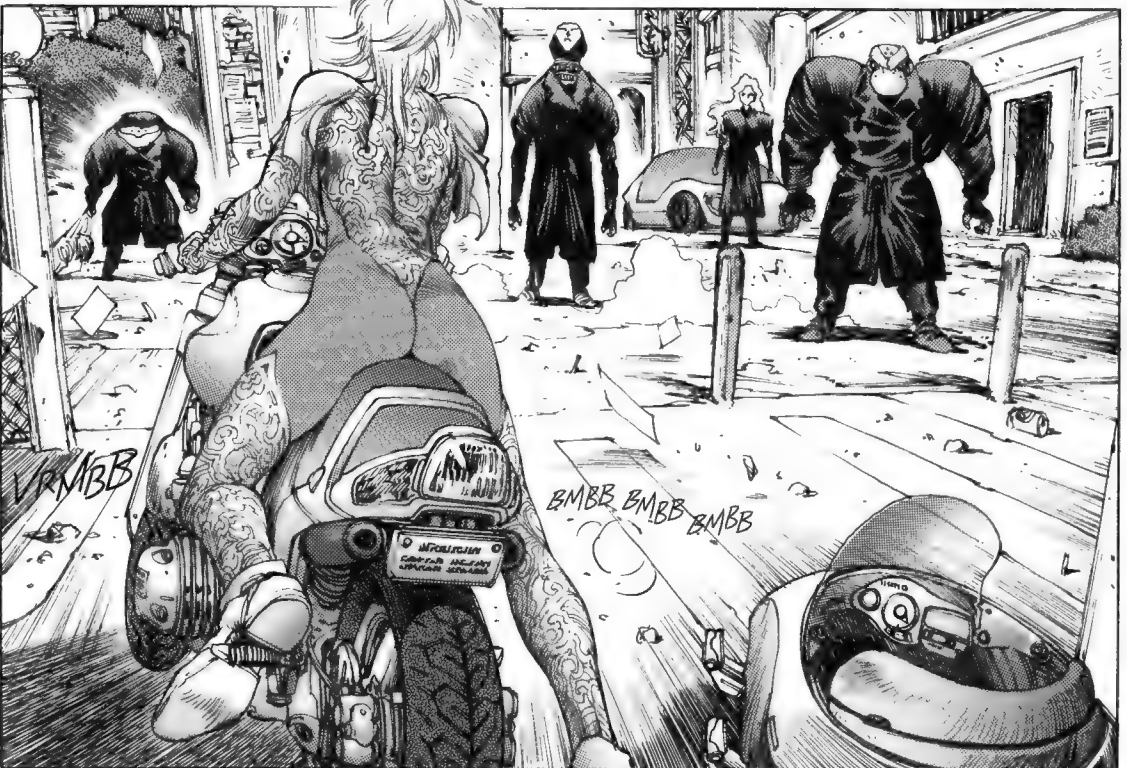
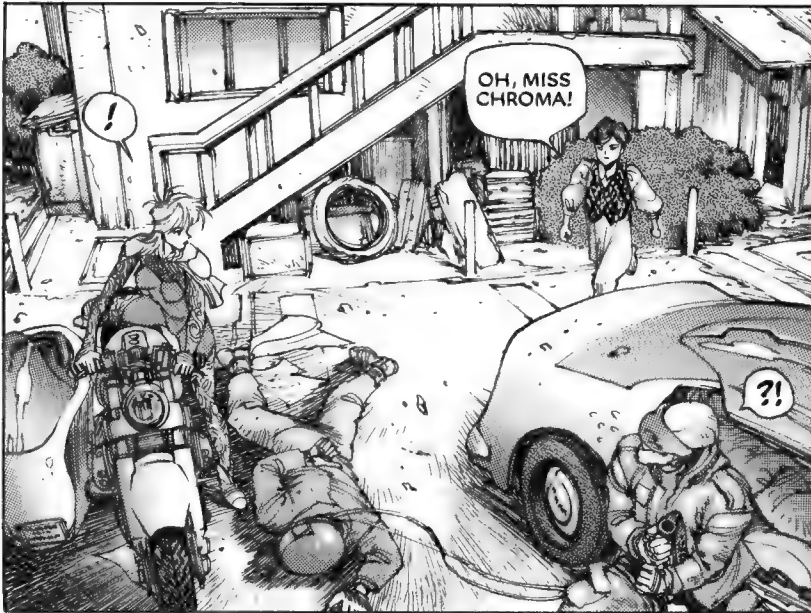
JUST A
DIRECT
CONNECTION.



YOUR BOSS IS USING
A DEFENSE ARRAY I
PUT TOGETHER, SO
WHEN THERE'S A
COUNTER-ATTACK
IT'LL BE EASIER TO
FIND OUT WHO THE
ENEMY IS. YOU KNEW
THAT, RIGHT...?









HMM...LOOKS LIKE I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET OUT OF THE GAME'S SELECTION STAGE.

WONDER IF I'M REALLY BACK IN A PHYSICAL REALITY...?

EITHER WAY, PROBABLY ISN'T MUCH DIFFERENCE IN THE BEHAVIOR ARRAY... BUT I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.

THEY'RE THE BOUNCERS FROM A LOCAL DANCE CLUB. I'M PUTTING TOGETHER AN INFECTION ROUTE FOR YOU...

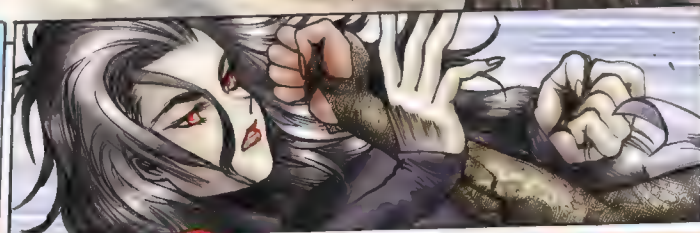
INJECT THE SAME VIRAL ARRAY AS LAST TIME! ANALYZE CHANGES IN THE ENEMY'S RESPONSE AND GIVE ME A REPORT!

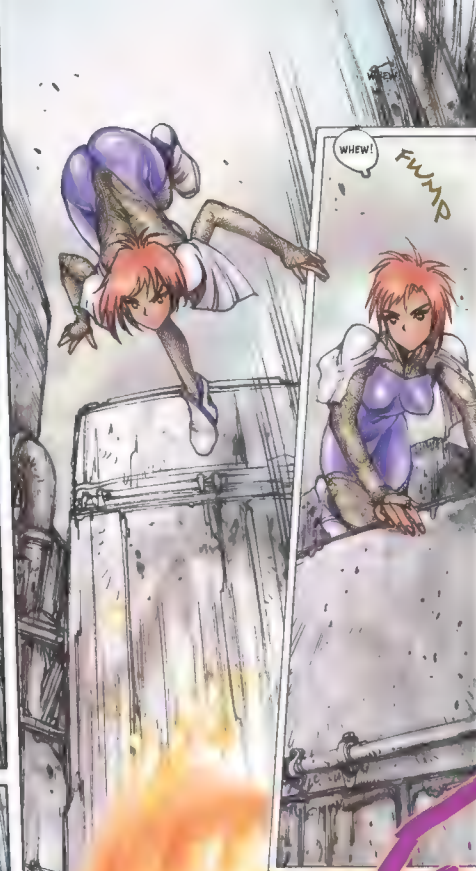
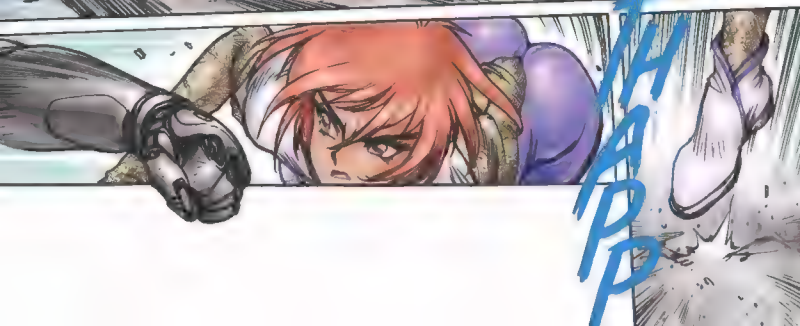
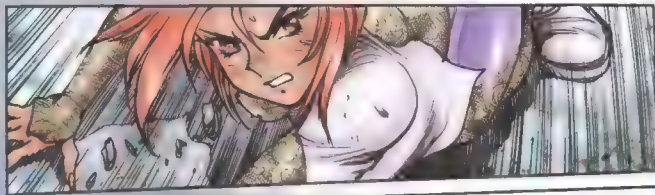
THE LOCAL POLICE SWAT SQUAD HAS BEEN MOBILIZED.

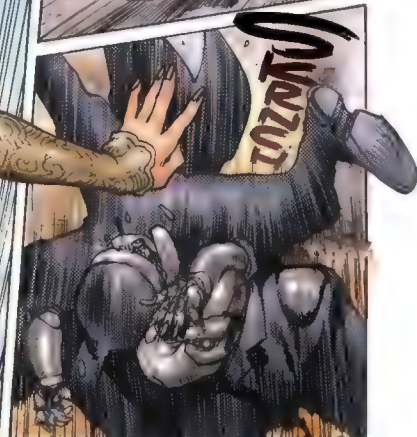
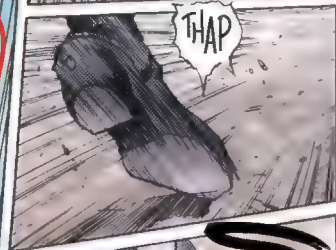
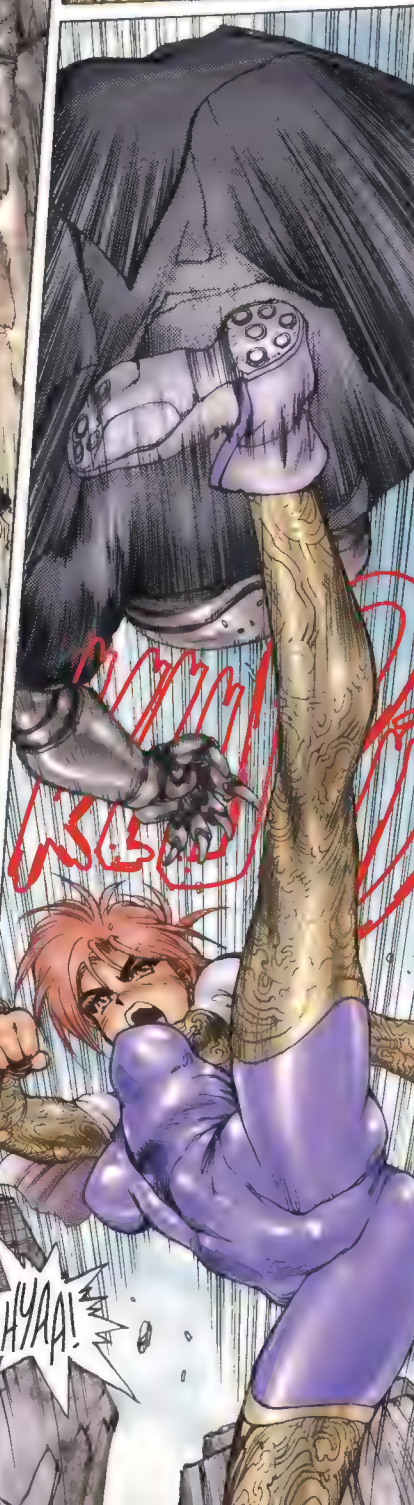
DO A TRACE ON THE ROUTE AND MONITOR IT. IT'S TOO SOON! OUR OPPONENTS SHOULDN'T HAVE GONE NUTS OVER SOMETHING LIKE THIS...





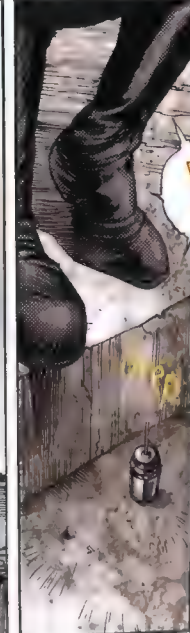
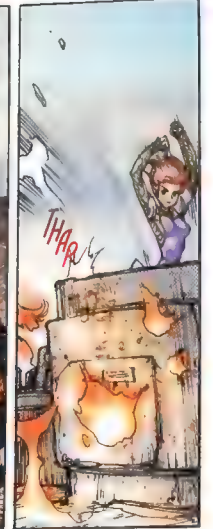
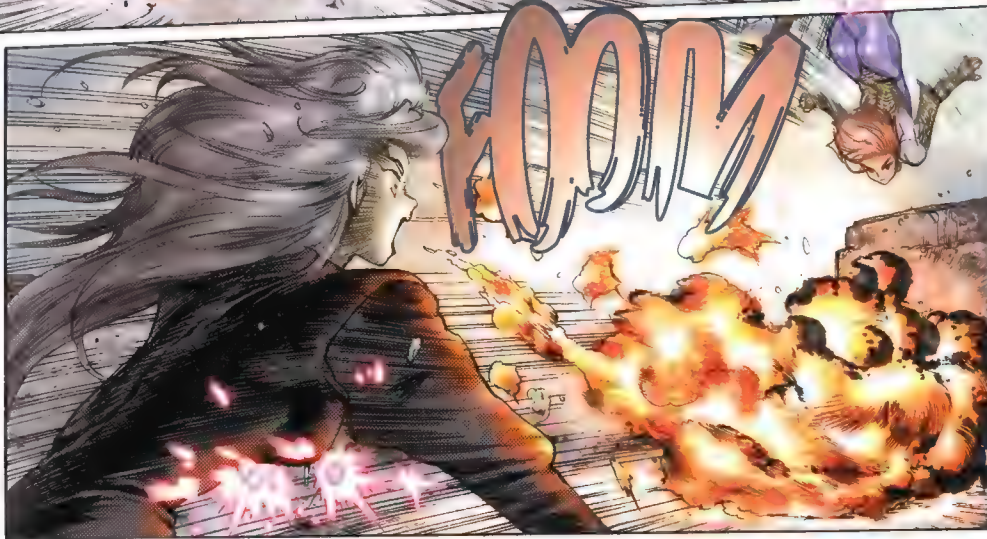
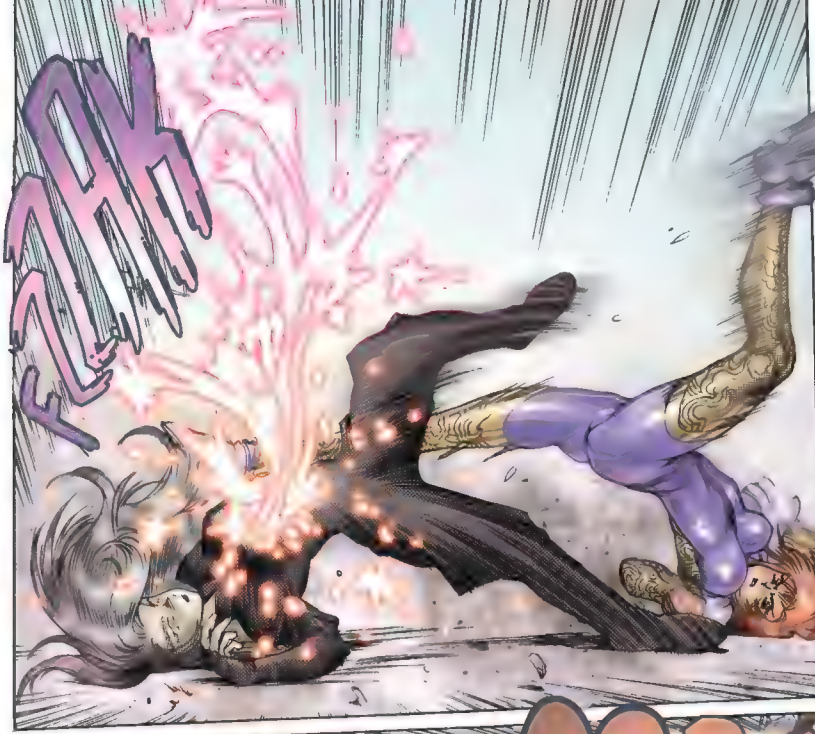






Chroma is a remote-controlled humanoid terminal, so she doesn't need to close her eyes when she takes a hit or exhale when she kicks someone. She's just imitating the reactions of the person operating her, but the reactions have no particular meaning for her.



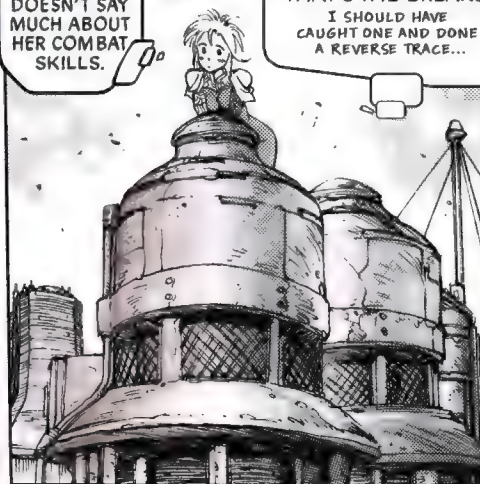




≥HMPH≤
GETTING
CAUGHT BY
THE SAME
TRICK TWICE
DOESN'T SAY
MUCH ABOUT
HER COMBAT
SKILLS.

SHE'S JUST A HOST,
SO MAYBE THAT'S AS
GOOD AS SHE COULD
DO...TOO BAD, BUT
THAT'S THE BREAKS.

I SHOULD HAVE
CAUGHT ONE AND DONE
A REVERSE TRACE...



SHE WAS USING
THE SAME
COMMERCIAL
COMBAT SOFTWARE I AM, BUT
UNMODIFIED. GOOD THING
I'VE GOT A
REINFORCED
FRAME...

SENDING FOUR
DIFFERENT TYPES
OF HOST BODIES
MEANS THEY'VE GOT
A PROBLEM WITH
THEIR INTELLIGENCE
GATHERING.



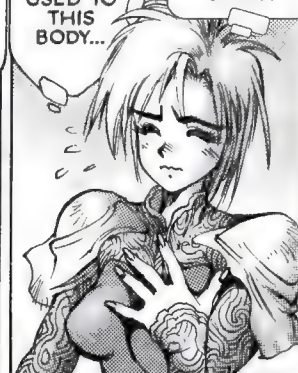
LOOKS LIKE THE TWO
HEAVYWEIGHT BODIES
AREN'T GOING TO BE ABLE
TO COME AFTER ME. BUT...
WAIT A SEC... IF THEIR GOAL
WAS TO **ELIMINATE** ME,
THEN THEY SHOULD'VE
GRABBED SOME FIREARMS
FROM ALGREN'S MEN!

SO THE
GOAL MUST BE
TO TAIL ME...
BUT THEN WHY
ATTACK ME
THE WAY
THEY DID?
CAPTURE...?

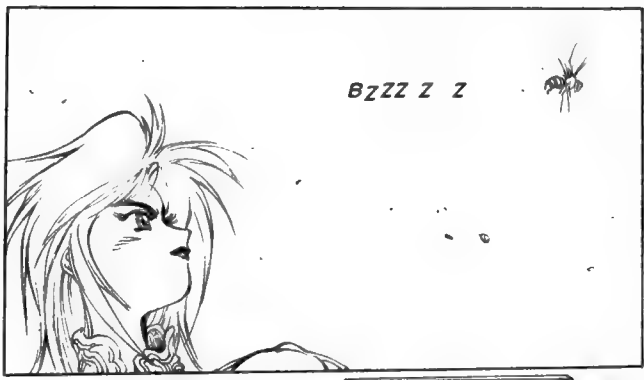
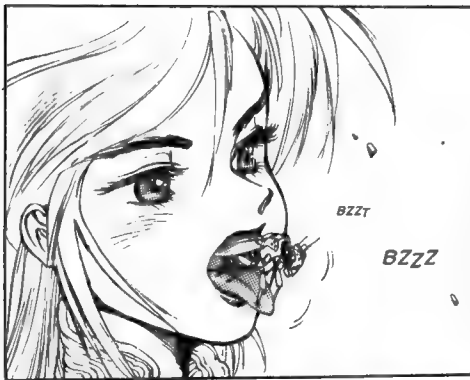
VERY STRANGE...

GEE,
JUST
WHEN I
WAS
GETTING
USED TO
THIS
BODY...

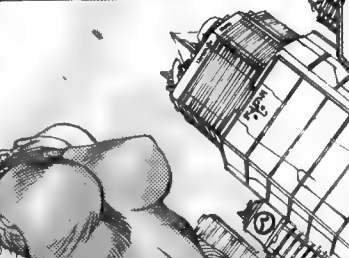
TOO BAD,
BUT I
GUESS I'LL
HAVE TO
PUT IT TO
SLEEP.



Commercial combat software: A type of program that automatically takes care of combat, in accordance with the body's previously set structural strengths and powers.



SET THE MINE
RELEASE AND
MAG-KILL TO
TRIGGER EITHER
TWELVE HOURS
FROM NOW OR
WHEN AN
UNCODED
EXTERNAL
CONNECTION
TAKES PLACE.



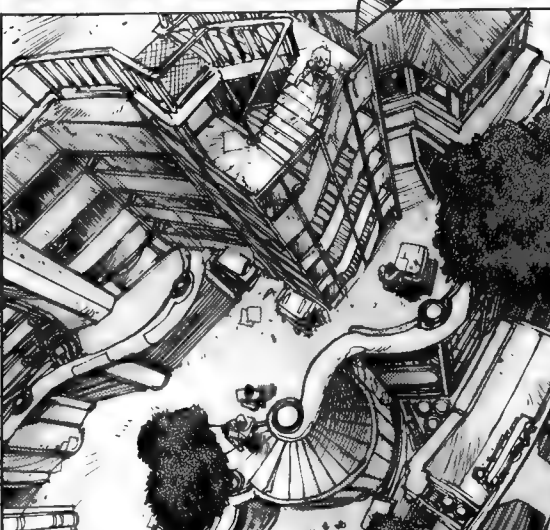
LOKI, HEAD FOR
OSAKA. SET A
TRAP IN THE
SAIKO HOTEL
AND STAND
BY.

CAN I DO A
STRUCTURAL
ANALYSIS
ON HER?

Since it's just to gain time, anywhere would be fine. Motoko has a stock of cars available and rooms she periodically secures in hotels. This will allow her to activate Chroma around eight hours later as a decoy.

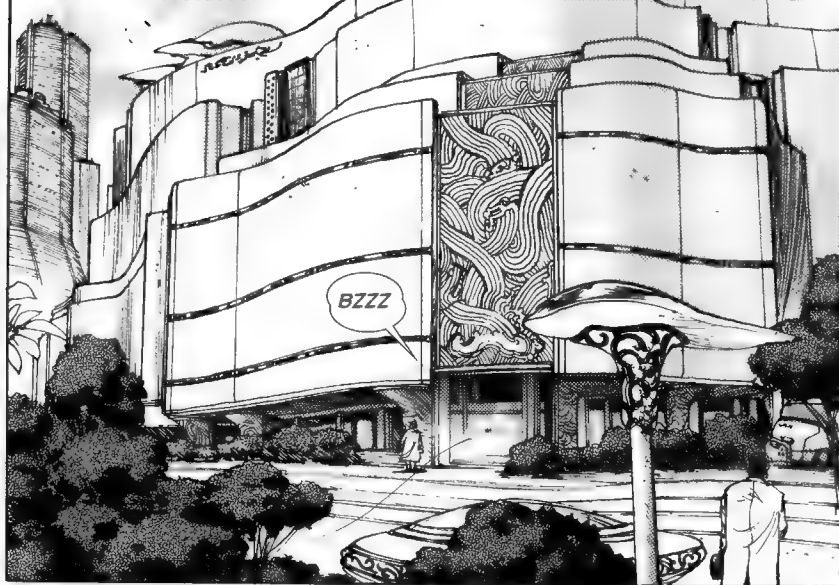
AFTER HIBER-
NATION,
YES.

HOO
RAY!

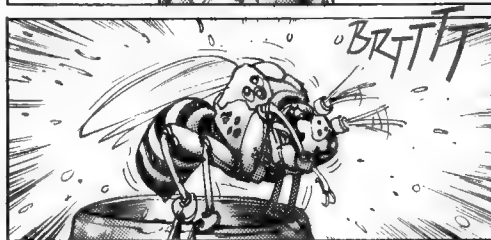
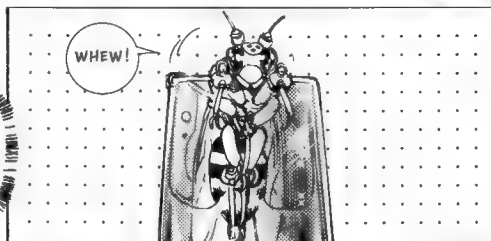


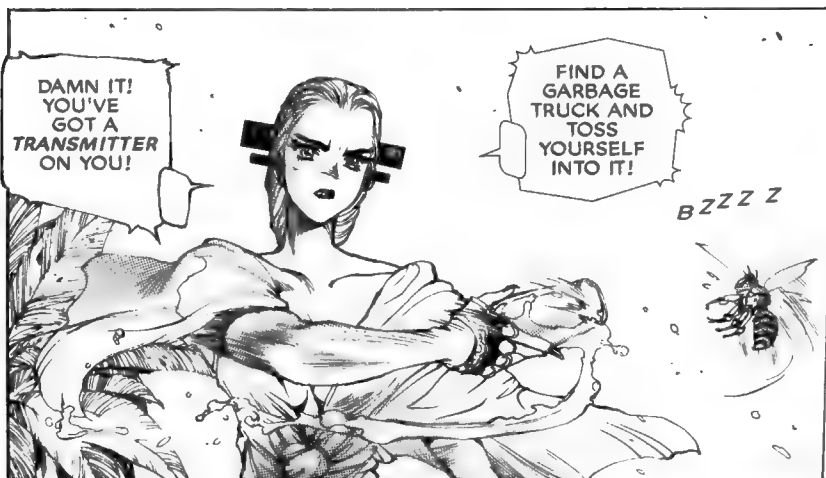
I WONDER IF RUNNING A
STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS IS
REALLY THAT MUCH FUN...?





Passing through greenery is a good way to throw larger pursuers off track. The heavier the growth, the easier it is to lose them, but you have to move fast.





The "sealing process" used here is the same type used on the building in the opening scene of *Ghost the Shell 1*. Most windows are coated with thin-matrix displays and use random-vibration jamming, so infrared sensors and laser listening devices are generally useless for eavesdropping. The degree of randomness in jamming can be deduced from the movement of the displayed images on the inside of the glass (reflections of trees moving in the wind, and of water, are common). These windows can also function as antennae, so one has to be very careful.



I DO
LOOK LIKE
SOMEONE
YOU KNOW,
RIGHT?



UMPH...
AH, THERE
WE GO!

UH,
NO.

WELL...NOT
REALLY.

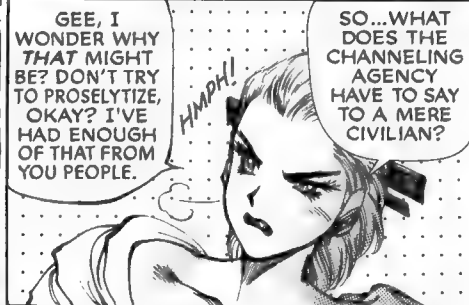
SO
WHAT'S
GOING
ON?



WELL, INSTEAD
OF SENDING AN
IMAGE TO YOUR
E-BRAIN THE
USUAL WAY, YOU'
LL PROBABLY BE
SEEING ME IN
THE FORM WITH
WHICH YOU WERE
MOST LINKED IN
YOUR FORMER
LIFE.

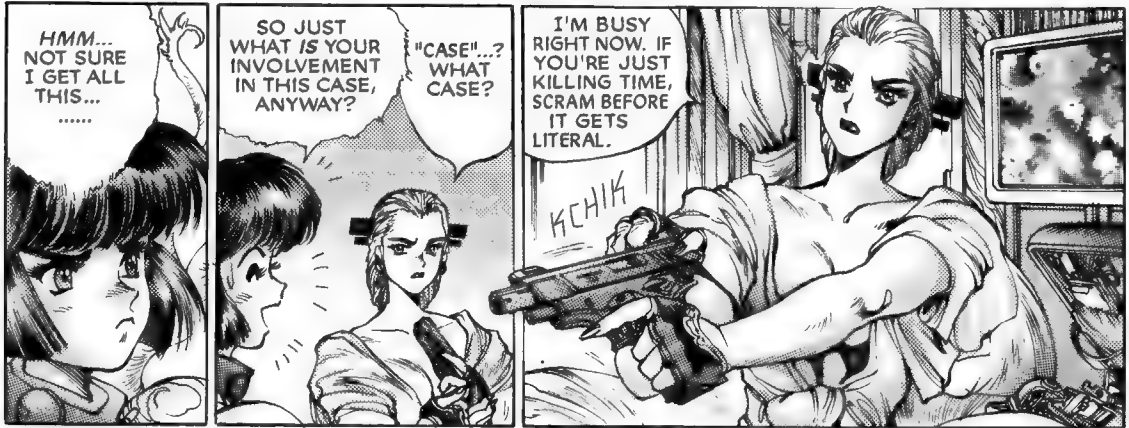
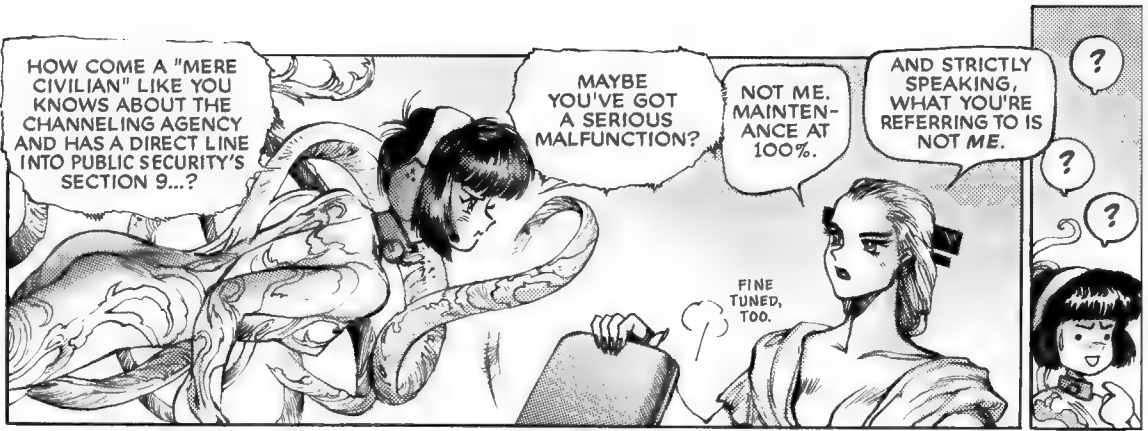
SOMETIMES
I APPEAR AS
A BLOODY
FALLEN
WARRIOR,
AND PEOPLE
MISTAKE ME
FOR A GHOST...

GEE, I
WONDER WHY
THAT MIGHT
BE? DON'T TRY
TO PROSELYTIZE,
OKAY? I'VE
HAD ENOUGH
OF THAT FROM
YOU PEOPLE.

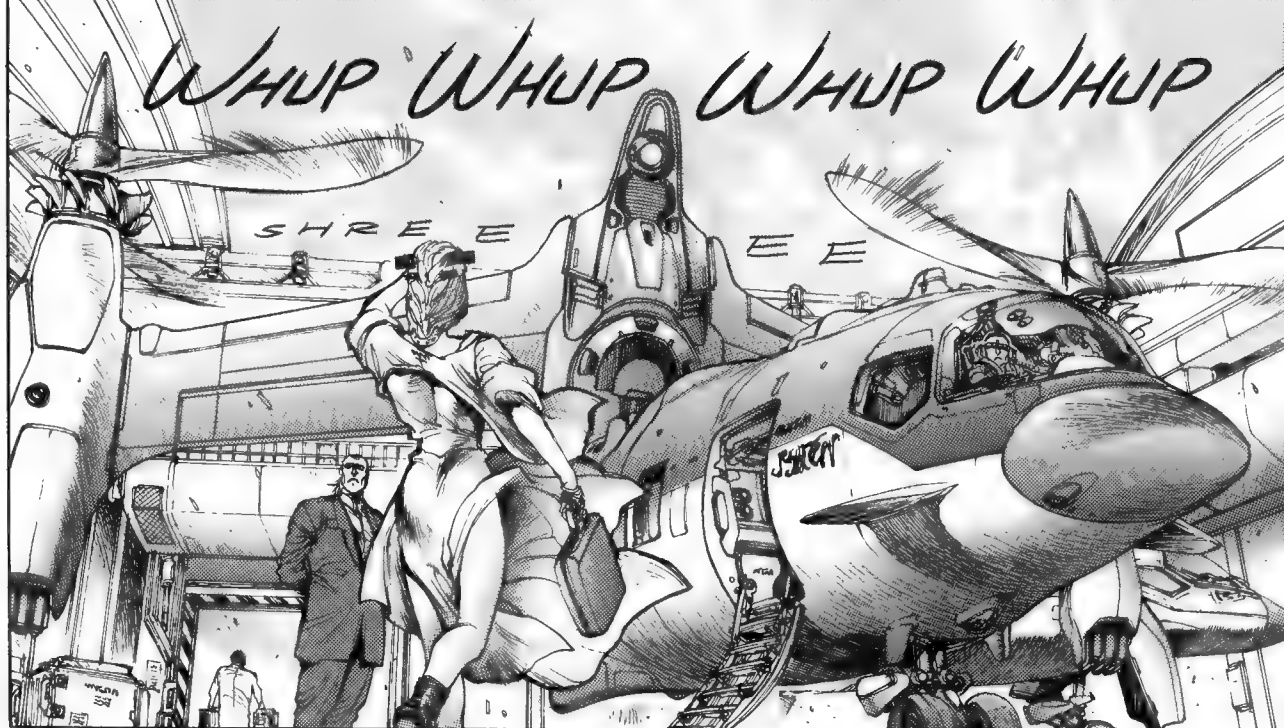


SO...WHAT
DOES THE
CHANNELING
AGENCY
HAVE TO SAY
TO A MERE
CIVILIAN?

Channeling Agency: A secret organ of the State. Normally it helps suppress the scale of earthquakes and other disasters with feng shui, etc., or it is employed to psychically back up meetings with foreign VIPs. Among those who know of its existence, it's regarded as a very questionable agency....







WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

BUT, UM... SO WHAT WERE YOU DOING THERE?

HEAD FOR THE MAIN OFFICE'S CENTRAL SECTOR AT STEALTH LEVEL 2.

YES, MA'AM.

I WANT YOU USE "BATOU" TO CREATE AND SECURE A ROUTE TO THE COMBAT SKILLS LAB AT JAPAN'S PUBLIC SECURITY HEADQUARTERS, THEN STAND BY.

Let's assume that Motoko and Tamaki's conversation is actually all mental and therefore inaudible.

HEY!! I MIGHT LAY A CURSE ON YOU IF YOU DON'T TELL ME STUFF!

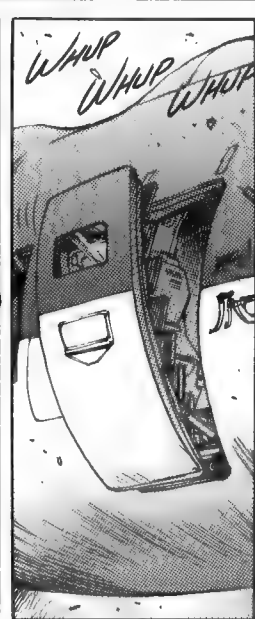
SORRY. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS PREVENT ME FROM TALKING.

IF YOU PLAN TO COME WITH ME, DON'T FORGET THERE'S A PRETTY ADVANCED PSYCHIC WHERE I'M GOING, TOO.

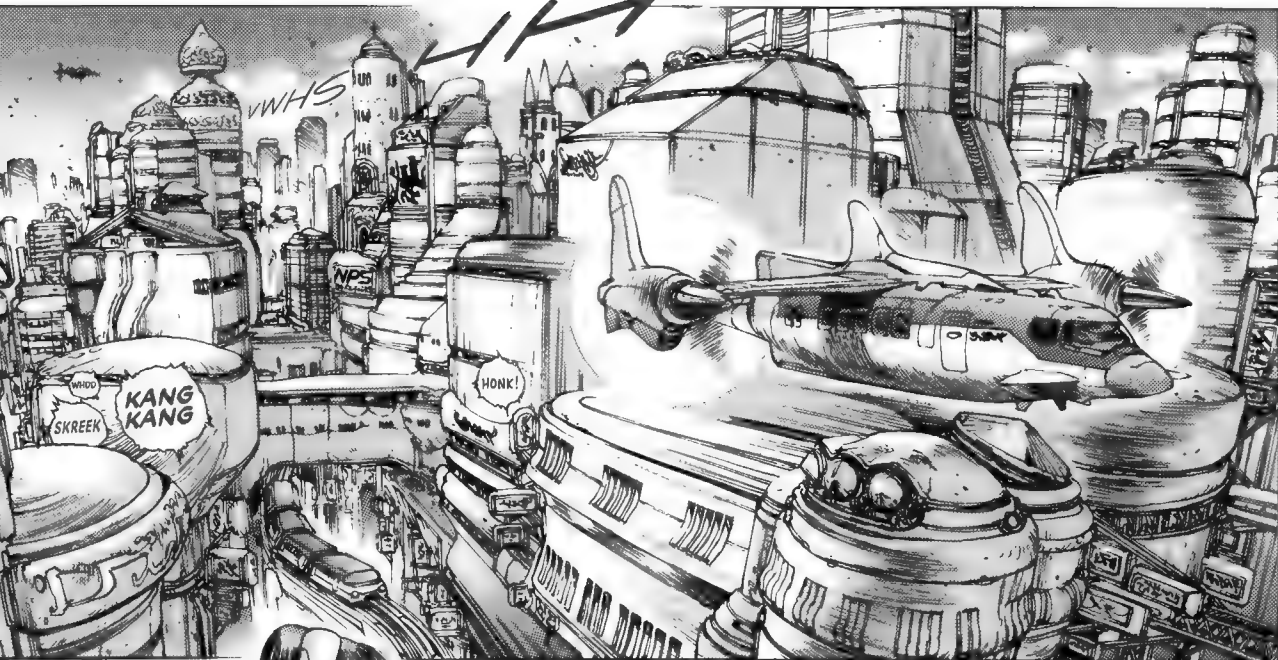
KANG
KANG
KANG

RRRGH! IF ONLY I'D BEEN HOOKED UP WITH A BUDDHA-LIKE FIGURE WHO DIDN'T NEED TO BE TESTED!

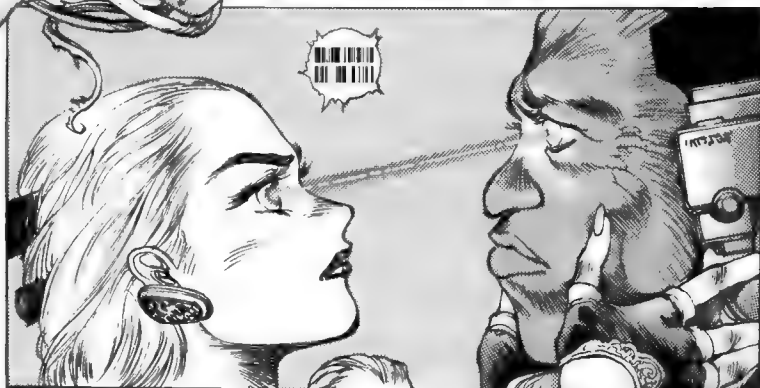
I WOULDN'T HAVE ALL THIS HASSLE...



The aircraft shown here is not actually a helicopter, but a tilt-rotor. In our story it's used for business and public service missions much more commonly than light aircraft or helicopters. At least that's the idea...

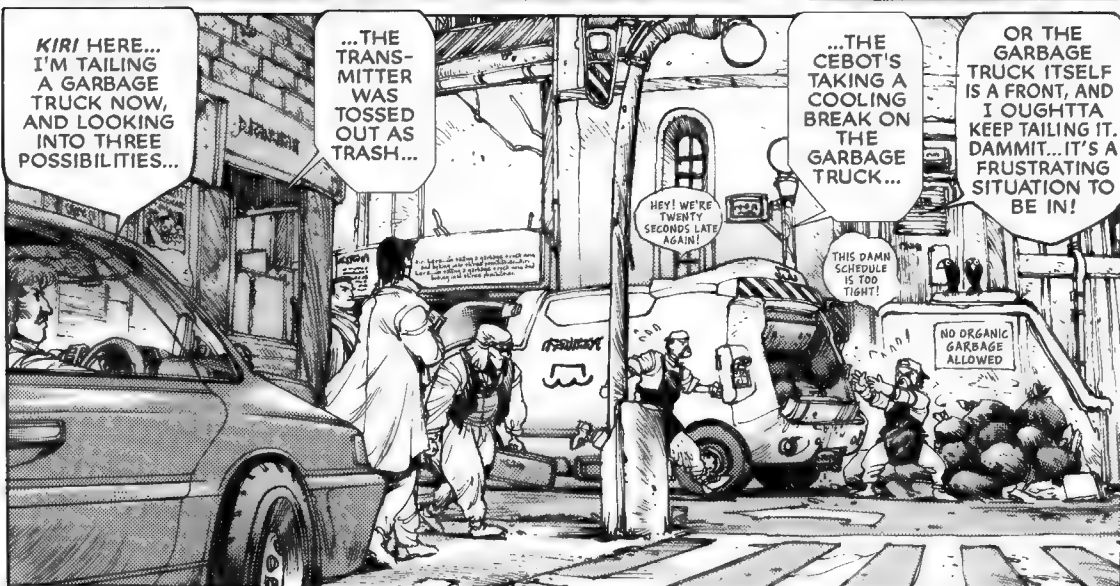


In reality the laser comms light wouldn't be visible unless there was a lot of smoke or dust in the room. (The transmitter revolves along with the vision system.)





FRACTO TO KIRI...AN OSPREY JUST TOOK OFF FROM THE BUILDING VISITED BY THE BEE-TYPE CEBOT, AND IT'S NOW PASSING OVERHEAD. IT'S A WEIRD ONE THAT DOESN'T REGISTER ON SATELLITE, BUT THERE ARE NINE MACHINES THAT WOULD APPLY AT CONTROL.



A cebot is a "centimeter class" robot. It's usually anything from one to ten centimeters. As in the case of Motoko's bumblebee, many cebots are built to look like insects. Cebots are used to eliminate insect pests or clean sewers and usually operate in swarms (aka "insectrons"). Cebots are a product of nanotechnology, but they're too big to be referred to as nanomachines or micromachines.

In the second panel on the preceding page, they wait nine minutes at the airport before heading to another destination because they want to throw off anyone trying to monitor, pursue, or tail them. Unless an individual aircraft can be directly detected via satellite or radar, it can be hard to distinguish from a distance, as many small aircraft use the airport. Obviously, they're not going to fly directly to the airport, either—they'll go in a round-about way to throw any pursuers off track.

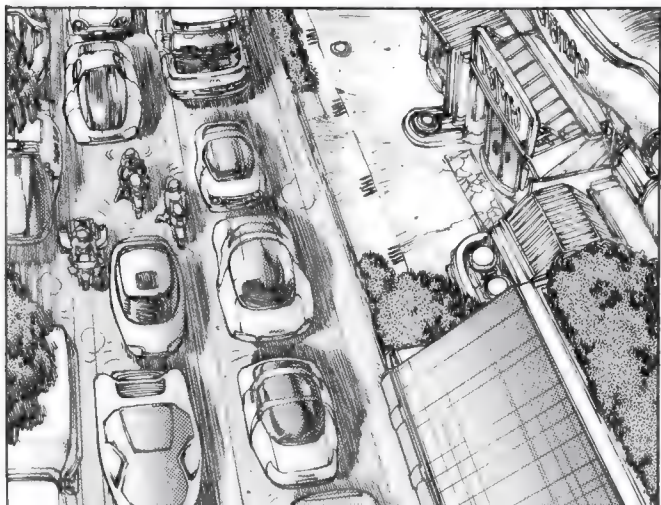
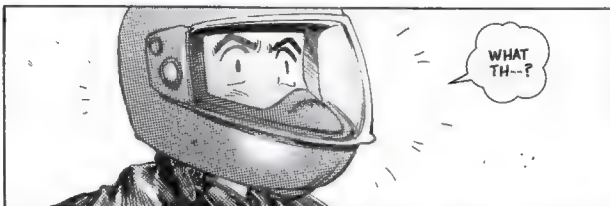
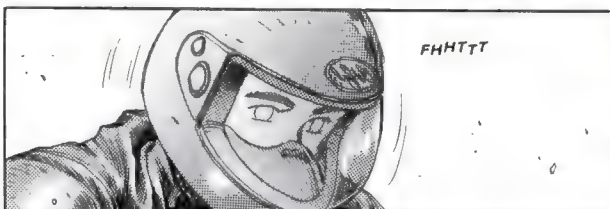
WELL, I JUST GOT A READOUT FROM THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT-- BOTH TRUCK AND WORKERS ARE APPARENTLY THE REAL THING.

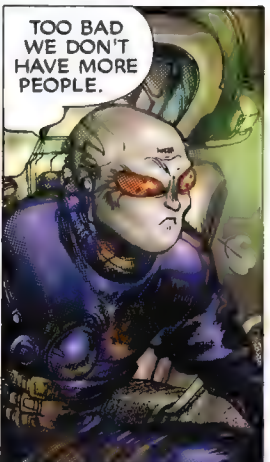
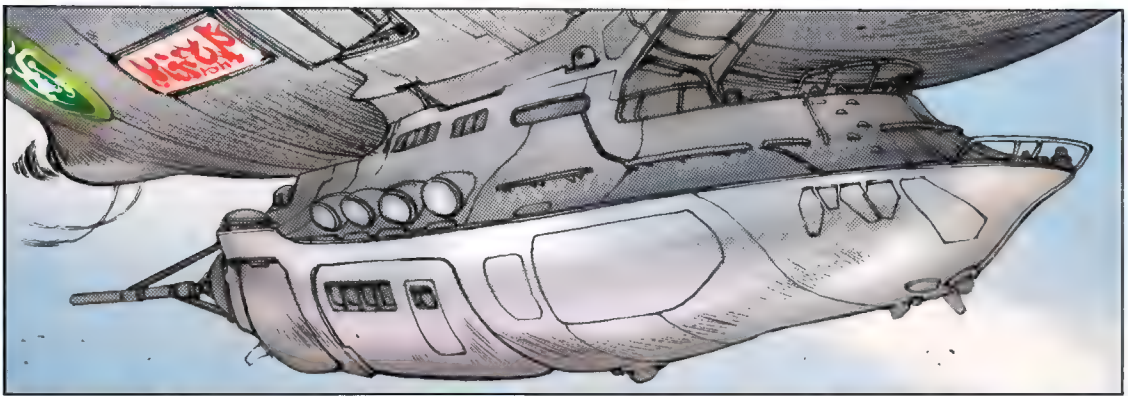
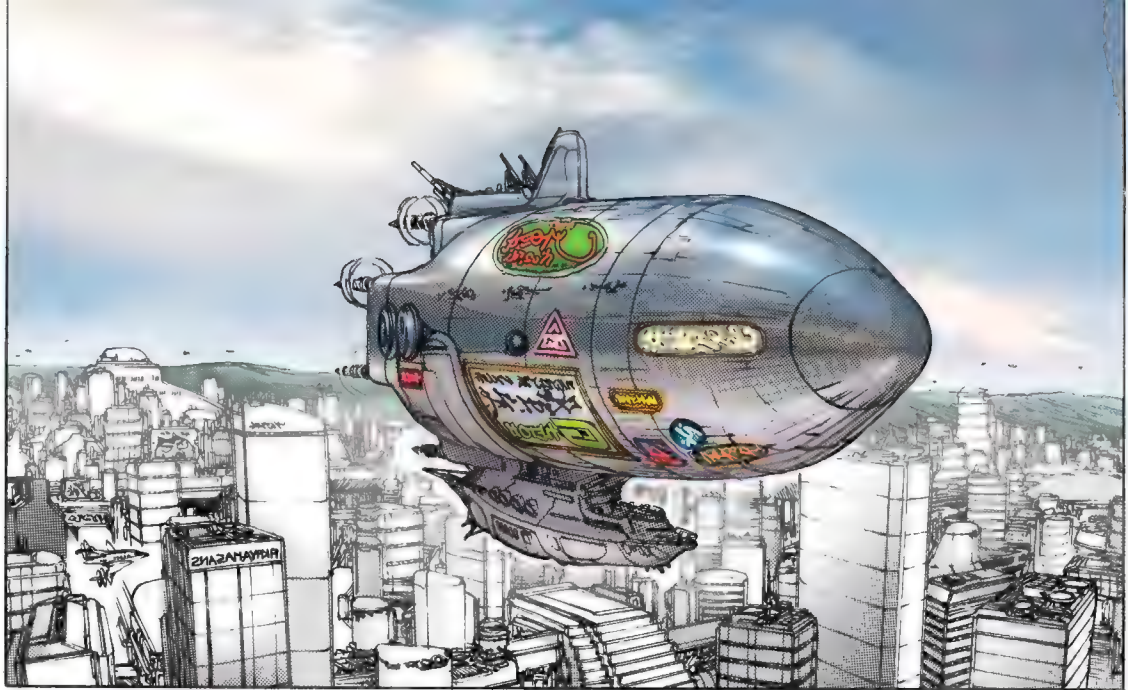
USE THE SANITATION DEPARTMENT'S LINES TO TELL THE MEN TO FINISH COLLECTING GARBAGE AND TO HEAD FOR THE INCINERATOR PLANT, THEN LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THE TRANSMITTER SIGNAL.

OKAY. CHROMA GAVE THE "THING" TO THE DETECTIVE, ANYWAY, SO I'LL LEAVE THE REST OF THE TAILING UP TO YAMAZO.

I'LL DIS-ENGAGE HERE AND GO REPORT TO MOTHER...

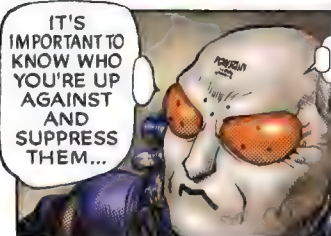
BRMBB
RMMBB



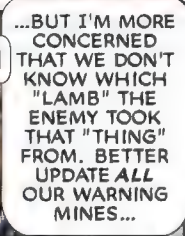


TOO BAD
WE DON'T
HAVE MORE
PEOPLE.

THU



IT'S
IMPORTANT TO
KNOW WHO
YOU'RE UP
AGAINST
AND
SUPPRESS
THEM...



...BUT I'M MORE
CONCERNED
THAT WE DON'T
KNOW WHICH
"LAMB" THE
ENEMY TOOK
THAT "THING"
FROM. BETTER
UPDATE ALL
OUR WARNING
MINES...



IF WE
ACCESS
MOTHER
THE
WRONG
WAY,
THEY'LL DO
A REVERSE
PROBE ON
US.

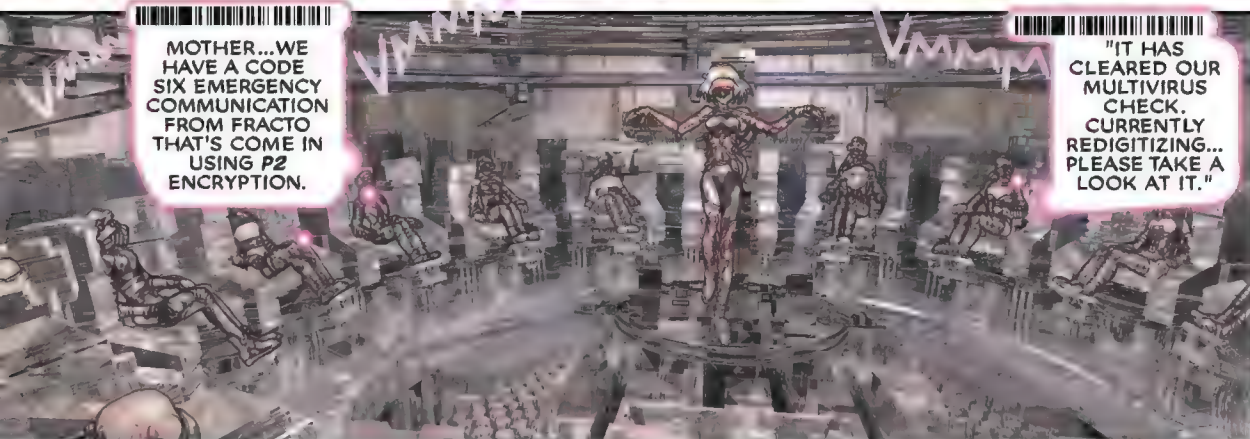


MOVE INTO
POSITION SO
WE CAN
COMMUNICATE
DIRECTLY BY
LASER.



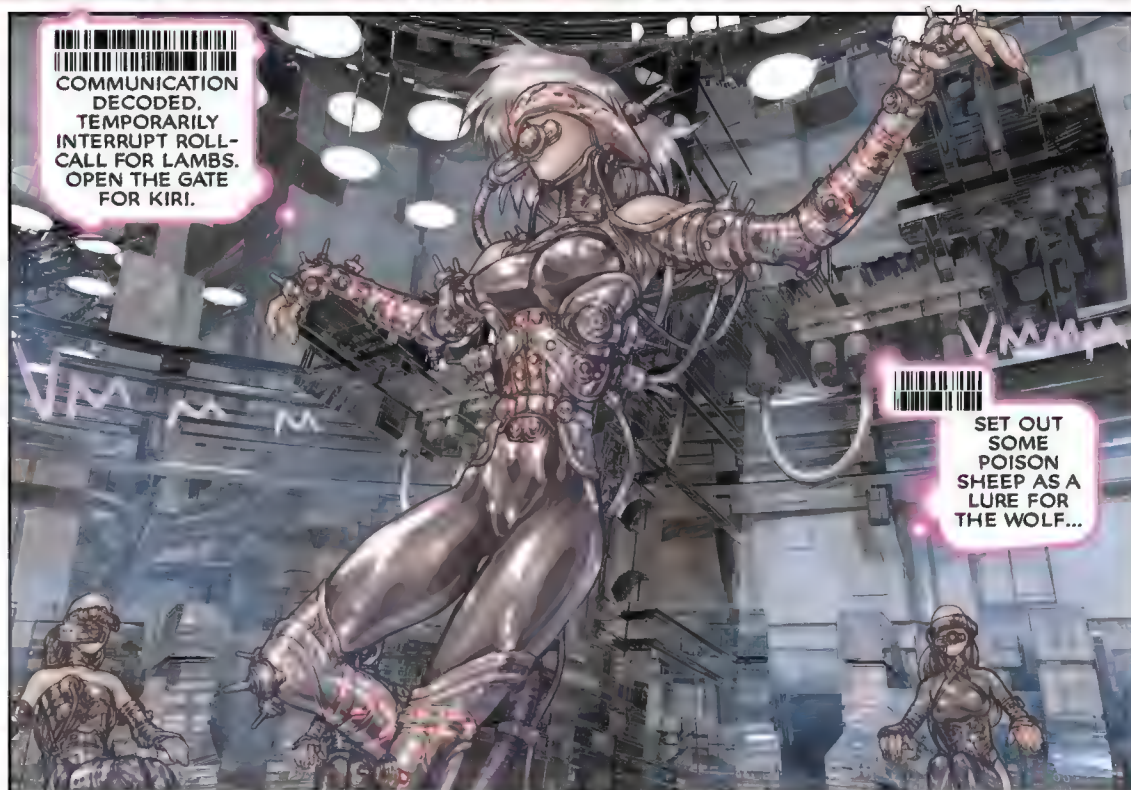
OKAY!





MOTHER...WE
HAVE A CODE
SIX EMERGENCY
COMMUNICATION
FROM FRACTO
THAT'S COME IN
USING P2
ENCRIPTION.

"IT HAS
CLEARED OUR
MULTIVIRUS
CHECK.
CURRENTLY
REDIGITIZING...
PLEASE TAKE A
LOOK AT IT."



COMMUNICATION
DECODED.
TEMPORARILY
INTERRUPT ROLL-
CALL FOR LAMBS.
OPEN THE GATE
FOR KIRI.

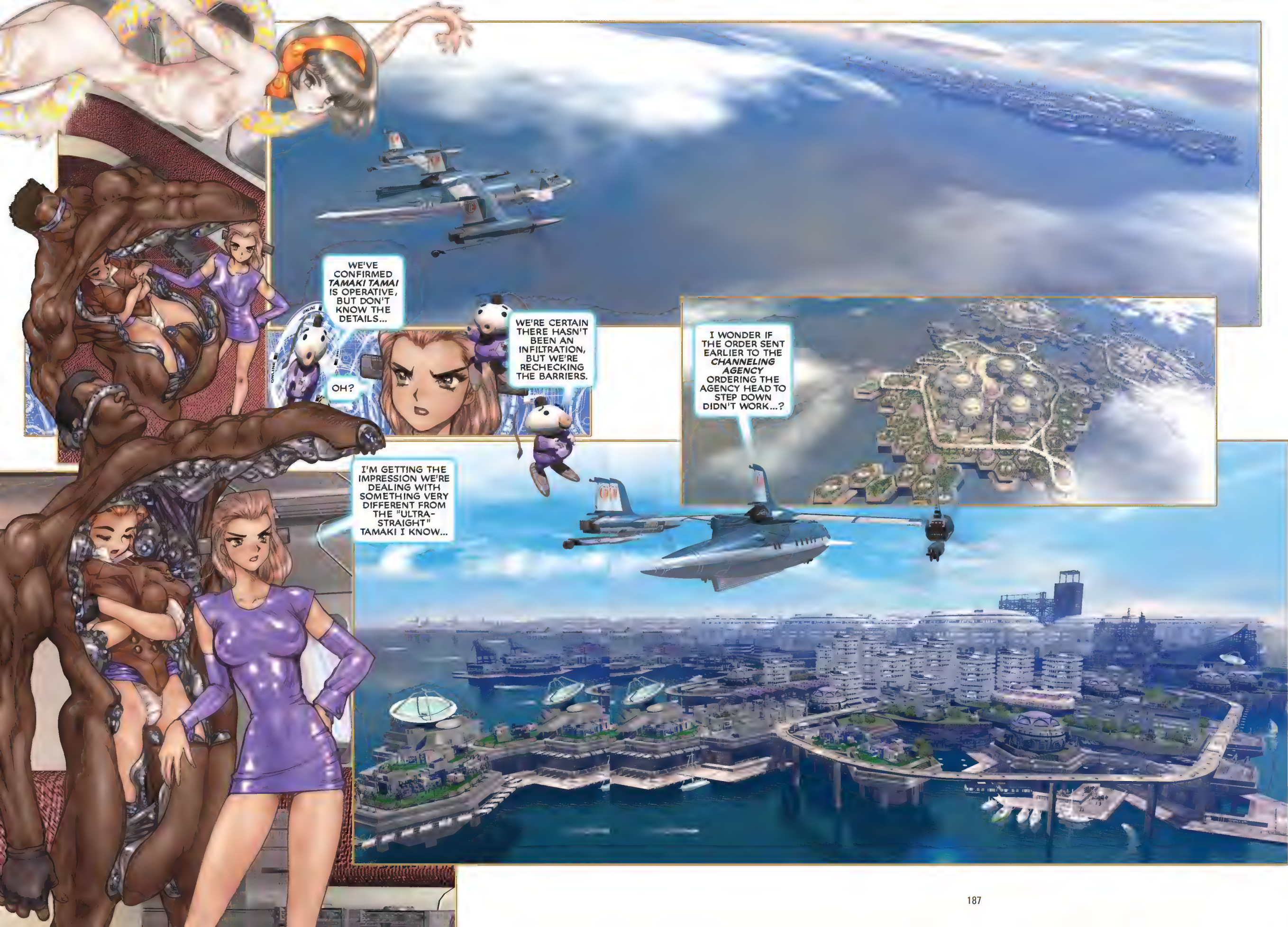
SET OUT
SOME
POISON
SHEEP AS A
LURE FOR
THE WOLF...

M O L D O F L I F E

05



2035.03.06.PM01.54



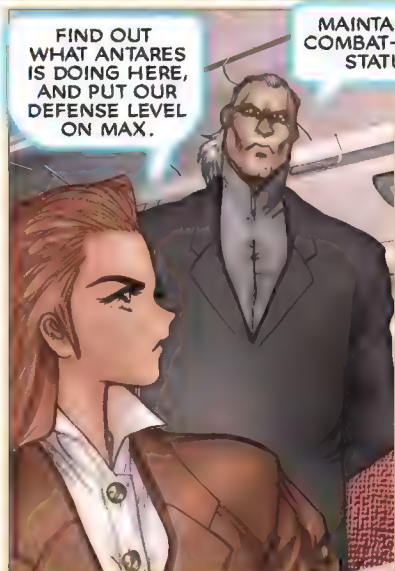
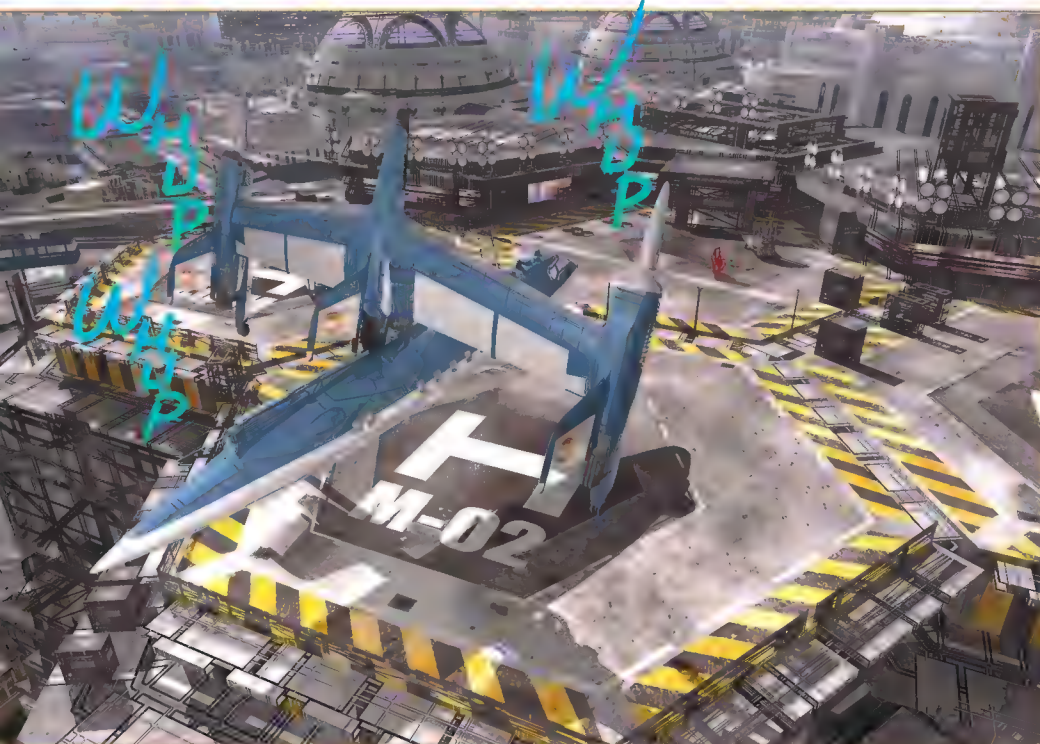
WE'VE
CONFIRMED
TAMAKI TAMAI
IS OPERATIVE,
BUT DON'T
KNOW THE
DETAILS...

OH?

WE'RE CERTAIN
THERE HASN'T
BEEN AN
INFILTRATION,
BUT WE'RE
RECHECKING
THE BARRIERS.

I WONDER IF
THE ORDER SENT
EARLIER TO THE
CHANNELING
AGENCY
ORDERING THE
AGENCY HEAD TO
STEP DOWN
DIDN'T WORK...?

I'M GETTING THE
IMPRESSION WE'RE
DEALING WITH
SOMETHING VERY
DIFFERENT FROM
THE "ULTRA-
STRAIGHT"
TAMAKI I KNOW...



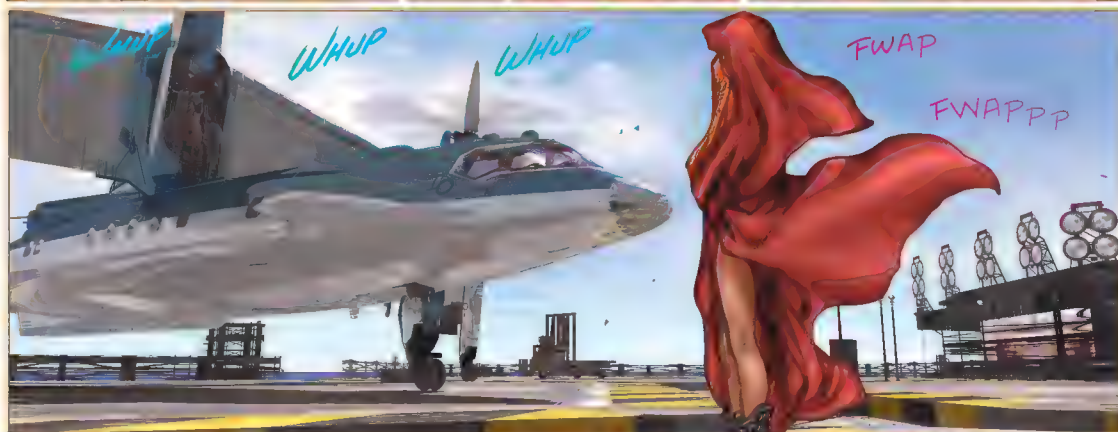
FIND OUT WHAT ANTARES IS DOING HERE, AND PUT OUR DEFENSE LEVEL ON MAX.

MAINTAINING COMBAT-READY STATUS.



THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT HAS APPARENTLY SEALED OFF DECATONCALE AND ARACNOSAT.

RIGHT OR WRONG, WE NEED TO RE-EVALUATE OUR POLICY ON CHANNELERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.



DECATONCALE: Name of a special supercomputer in this story. Only three such systems exist on the planet.
ARACNOSAT: Name of an optical satellite network system. Uses redundant communications lines to ensure throughput.



PERFECT. I *THOUGHT* YOU WERE THE TYPE WHO'D BE CHECKING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS DURING LUNCH!

SO, IN OTHER WORDS... YOU'RE IN A HURRY. RIGHT...?

MUSTA BEEN LOOKING AT MY RESUME...



YUP. I SAW IT.

I NEED TIME ON THE DECATONCALE TO TAKE ON SOME E-THUGS... AND I CAN'T AFFORD ANY COMPETITION FOR CPU CYCLES, SO CAN WE CUT A DEAL?



SORRY. EVEN A TOP EXECUTIVE OF THE COMPANY COULDN'T GIVE YOU--PROBABLY THE MOST SUSPECT PERSON IN OUR WHOLE ORGANIZATION--FREE ACCESS TO THE SYSTEM'S CORE FUNCTIONS.

CAN'T YOU COME UP WITH A REQUEST THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL SUPER-COMPUTERS...?



PRETTY PLEASE ...?

SORRY.

YOU BIG MEANIE!



WELL, I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO LEAVE THIS CASE UP TO THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT AND TAKE A PAID VACATION. YOU CAN TAKE OVER FOR ME.

WHATEVER. JUST MAKE SURE YOU SEND ME ALL CURRENT DOCUMENTATION ON THE CASE.



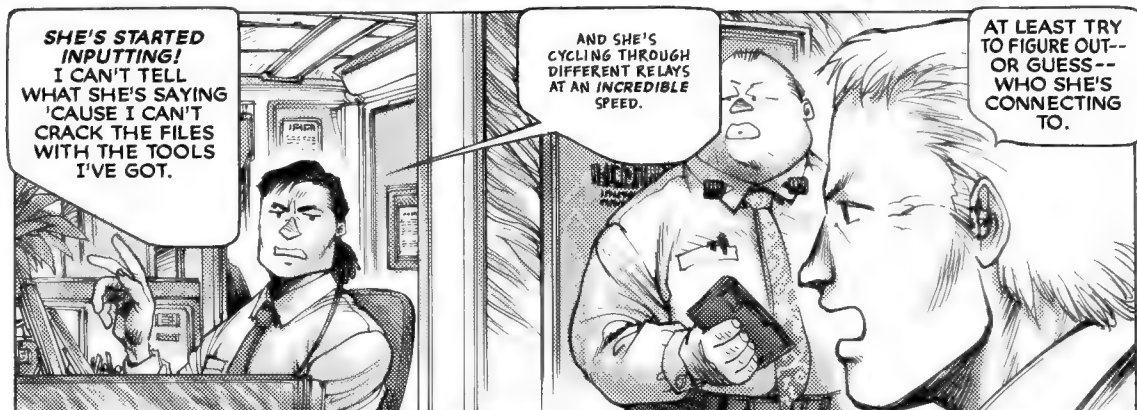
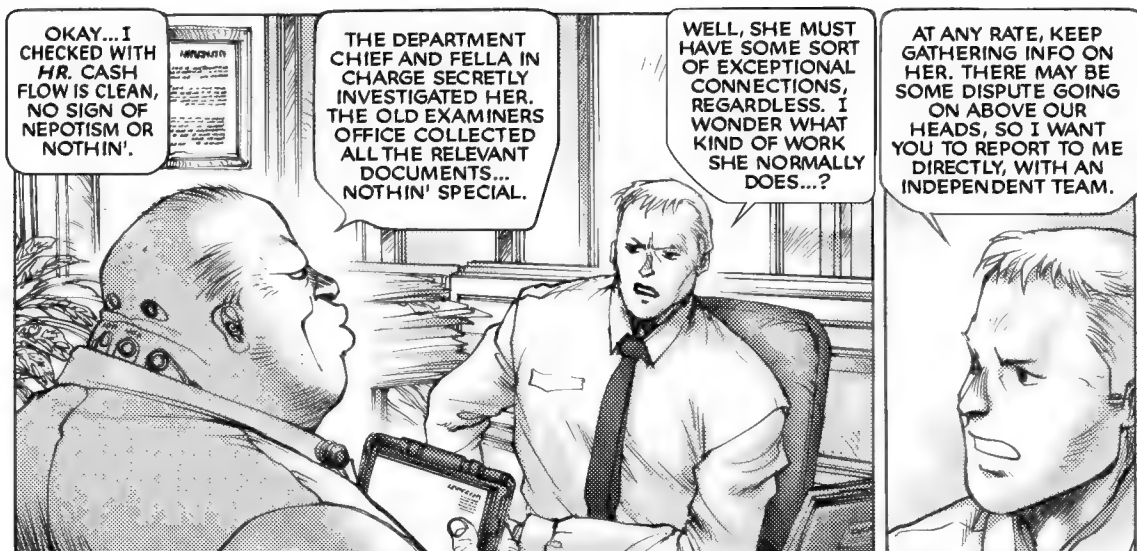
BY THE WAY, HOW COME YOU HAVEN'T MADE A REQUEST TO SECURITY FOR BODYGUARDS? MY REPUTATION AROUND HERE IS GONNA SUFFER.

WANNA TALK ABOUT IT OVER DINNER SOMETIME? IT'S FINE WITH ME...SEE YA LATER!

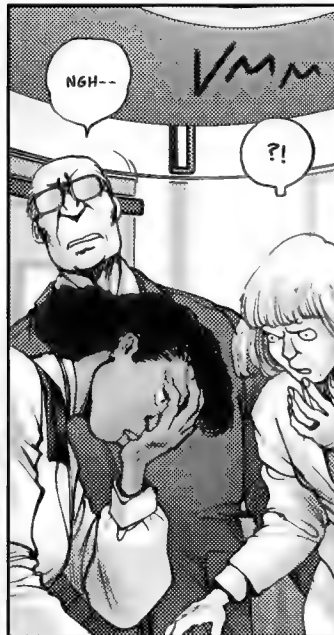
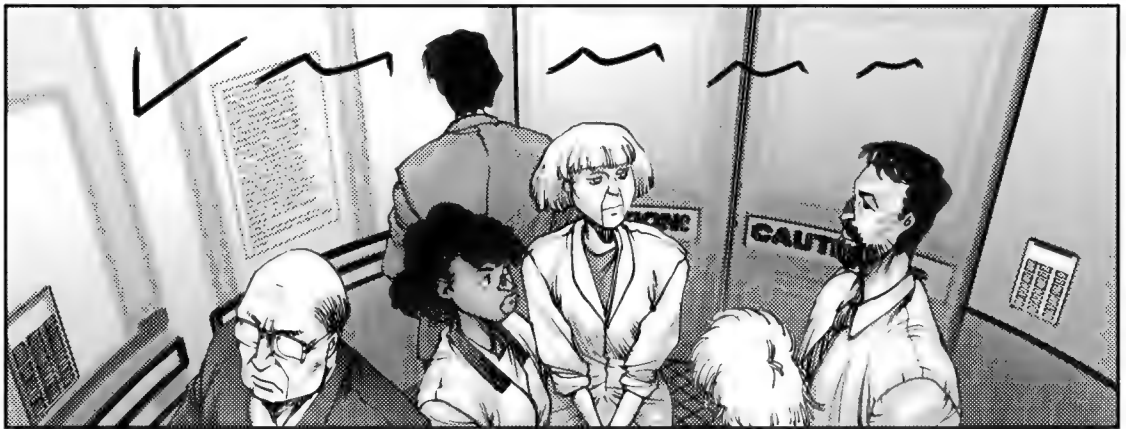
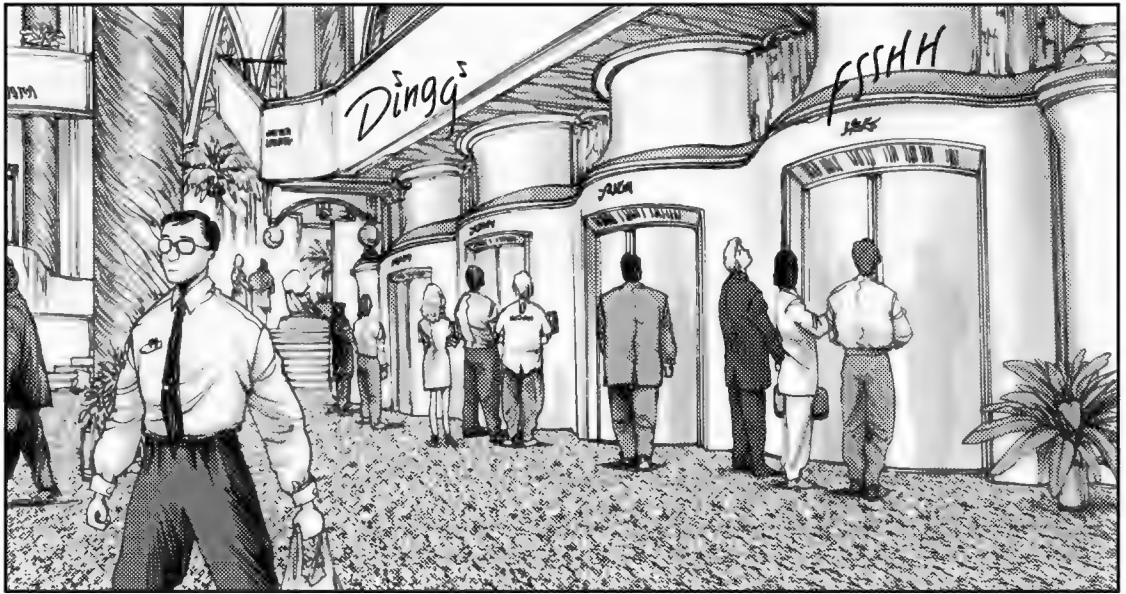


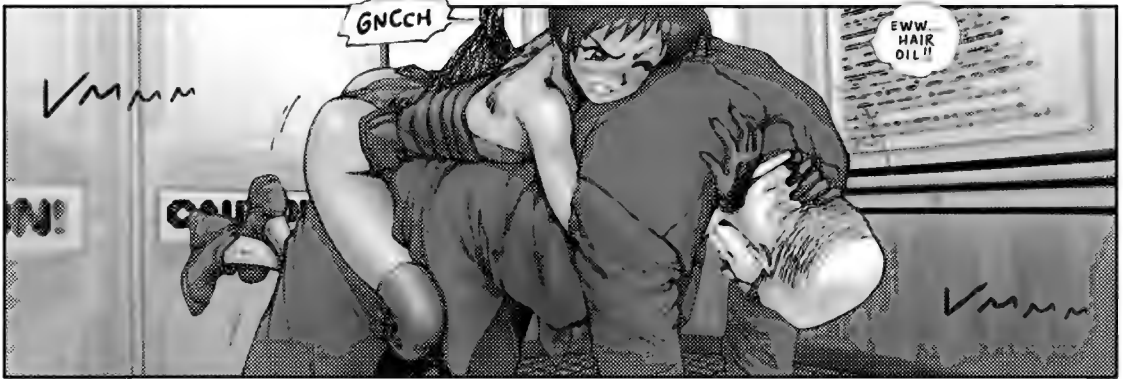
HMM...

DANGEROUS LADY, AIN'T SHE?

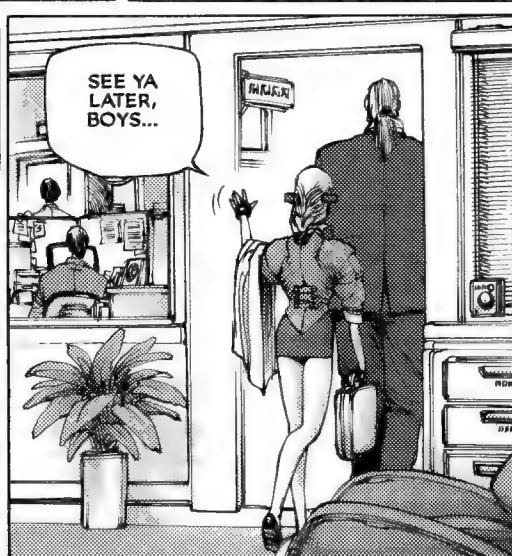
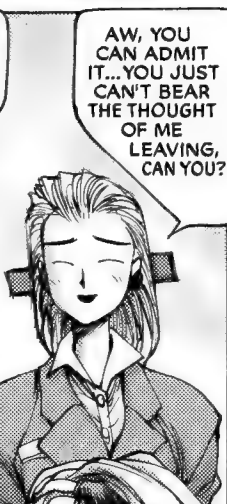
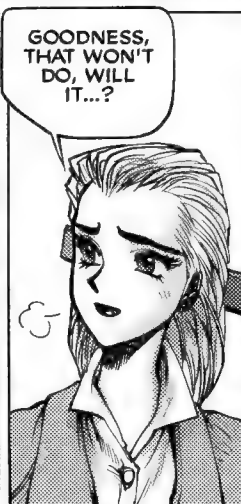
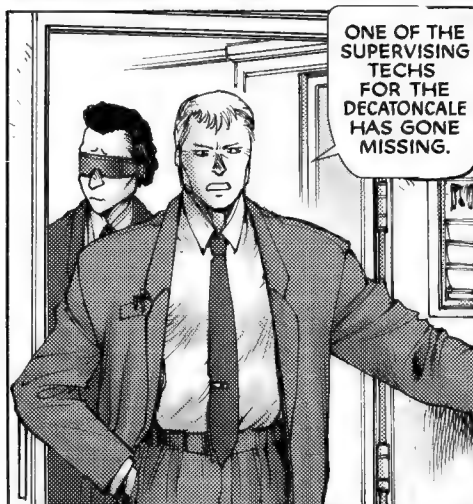


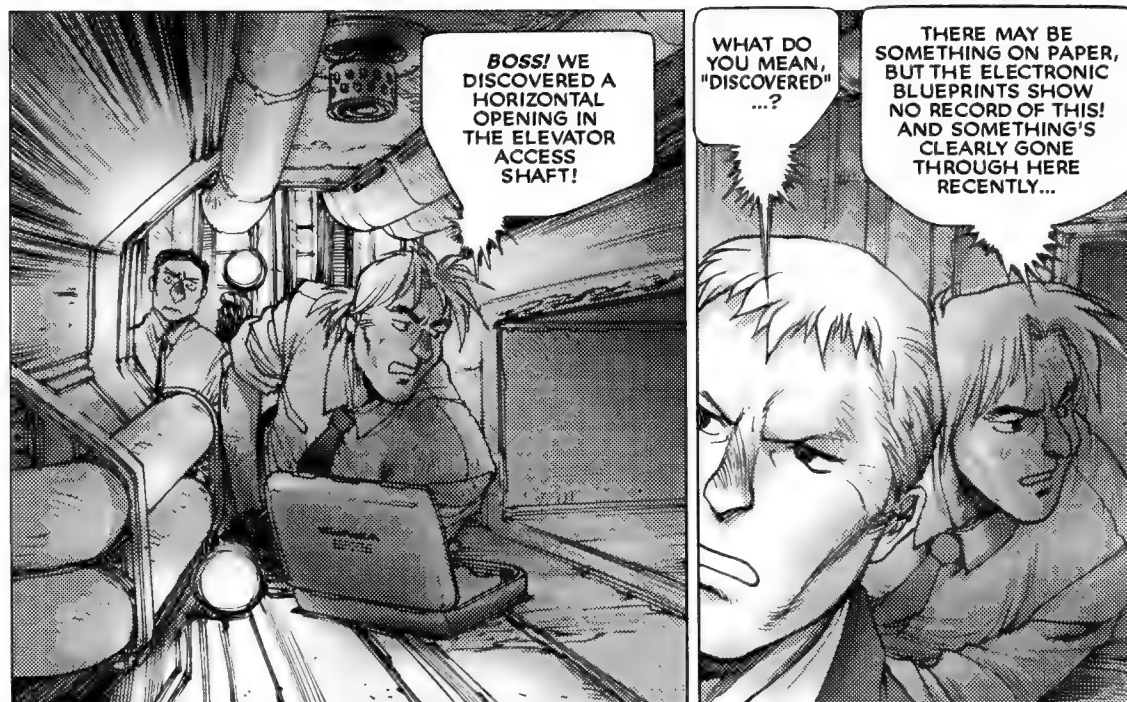
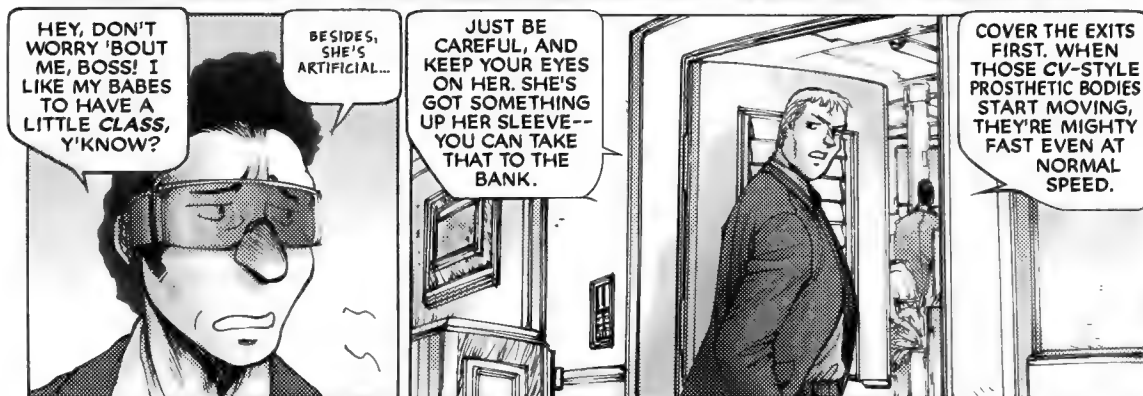




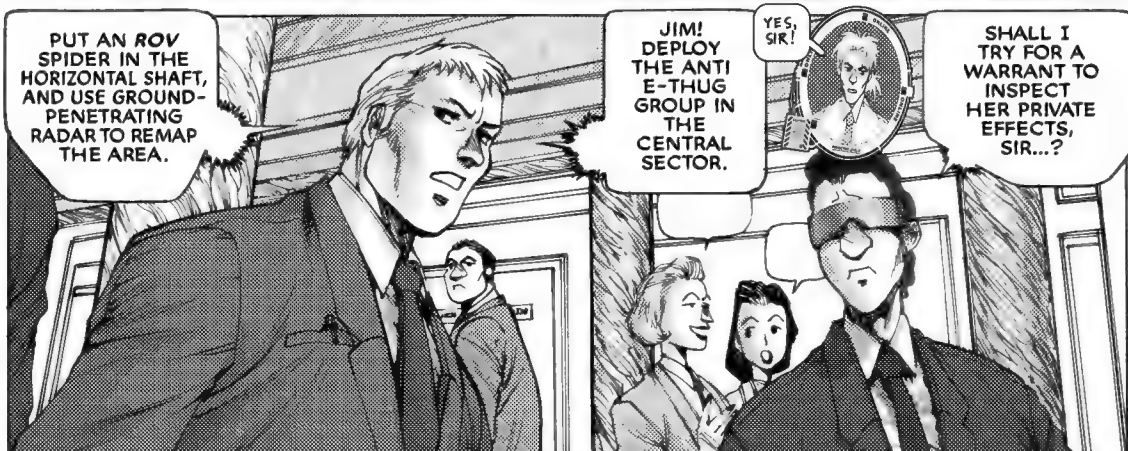
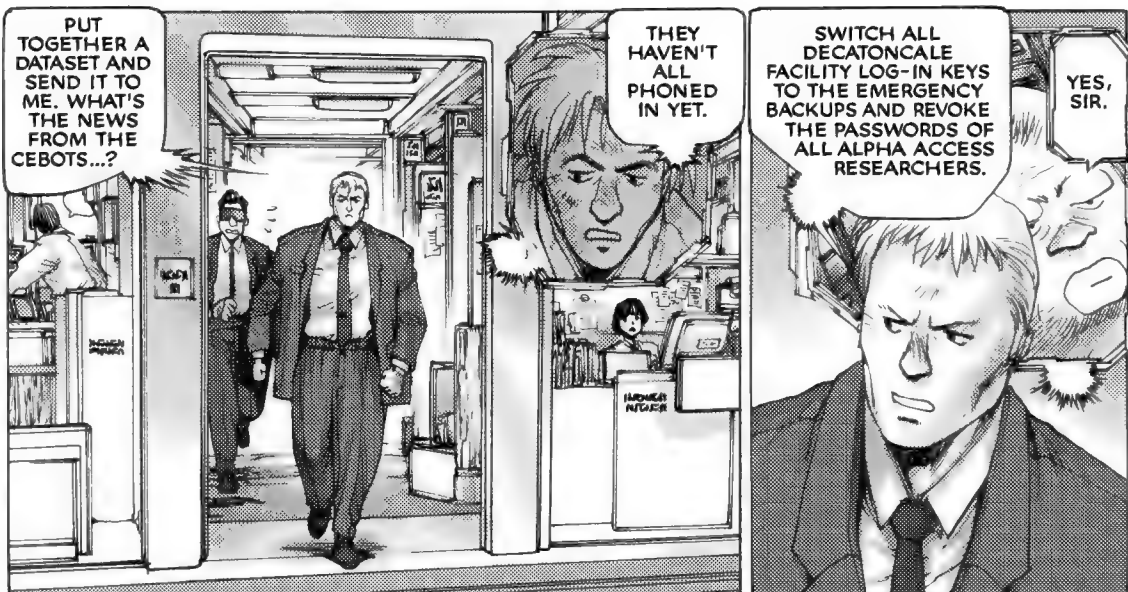








EYE-PULL: This isn't the name of a high tech device, but a technique such a magician might use. Sort of like a feint in martial arts. It requires using movements or elements that attract attention (in a properly timed fashion), and help to direct attention and short term memory in a specific way. In this case maybe we could call it "sleight of leg."



I've heard about the U.S. army's plans to use more fully equipped infantry and streamline and speed up their mobile armored forces (don't forget to reform the navy and the forces stationed in Japan while you're at it!). Of course, that's mainly for combat operations in different overseas environments, but as I mentioned before, Japan's military could use some major modernizing, too! The navy and the maritime safety agency, in particular, seem to be handicapped by too many concepts that date back to World War II, if you ask me. And you think the current army can really respond to a guerrilla action in an urban environment? That stated, I'd hate to see any swap made that involved the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Japan and a permanent stationing of atomic-powered carriers in the East China Sea.



UM... MS. ARAMAKI? WE'D LIKE YOU TO COME WITH US TO THE SECURITY OFFICE... WE'RE, UH, CHECKING PASSES...

GOODNESS! ON MY FIRST DAY OF VACATION?!



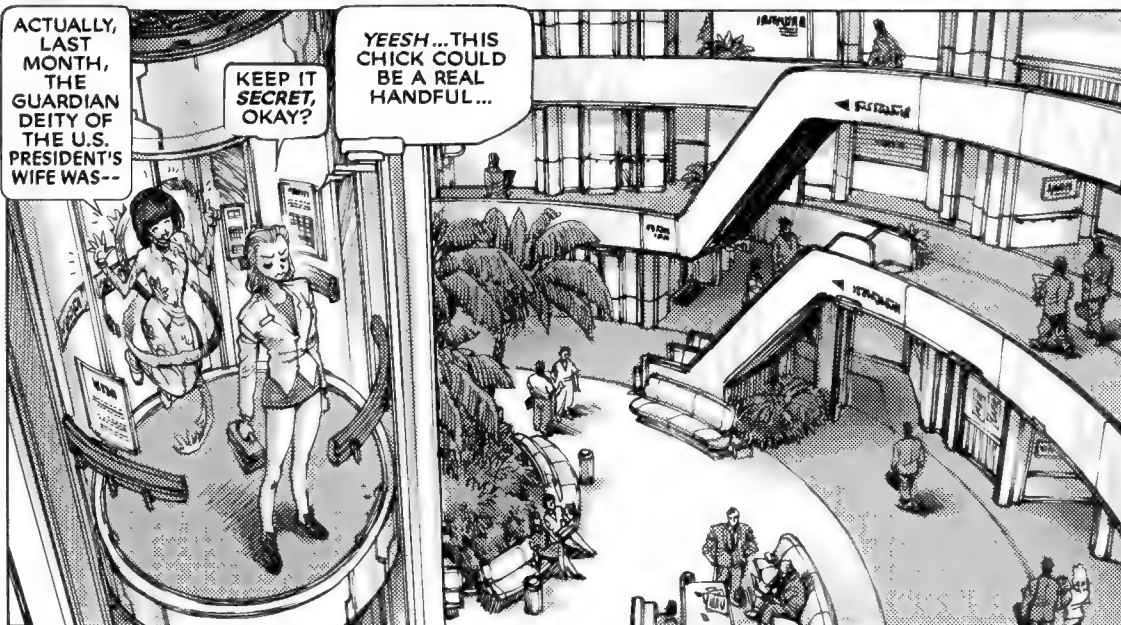
WANT ME TO PERFORM A PSYCHIC DISCONNECT BETWEEN THAT FAT OILY PIG IN THE ELEVATOR EARLIER AND HIS GUARDIAN DEITY?

SURE, IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD... BUT I WON'T THANK YOU FOR ANYTHING I CAN'T VERIFY!

DON'T WORRY, I WON'T ASK FOR A REWARD! IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, IT'S RESULTS THAT COUNT, YES?

YOU GOTTA KEEP IT SECRET, THOUGH!

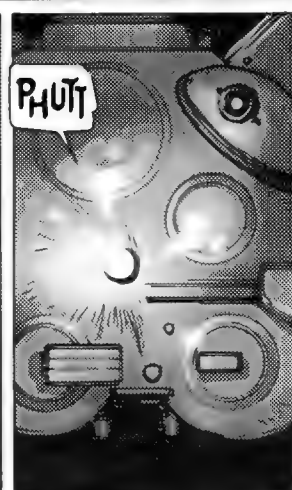
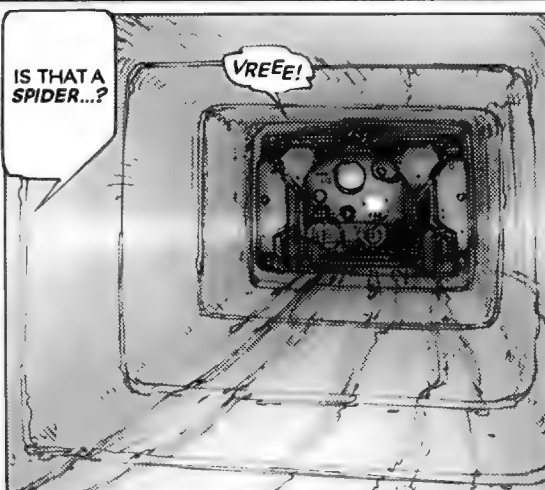
HEE HEE!



ACTUALLY, LAST MONTH, THE GUARDIAN DEITY OF THE U.S. PRESIDENT'S WIFE WAS--

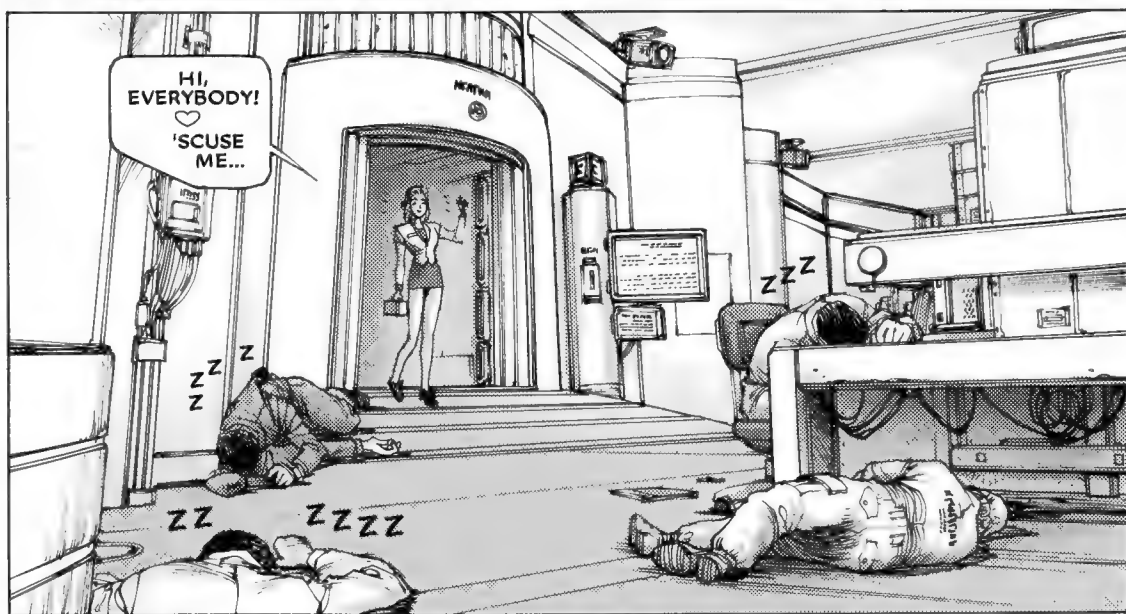
KEEP IT SECRET, OKAY?

YEEESH... THIS CHICK COULD BE A REAL HANDFUL...











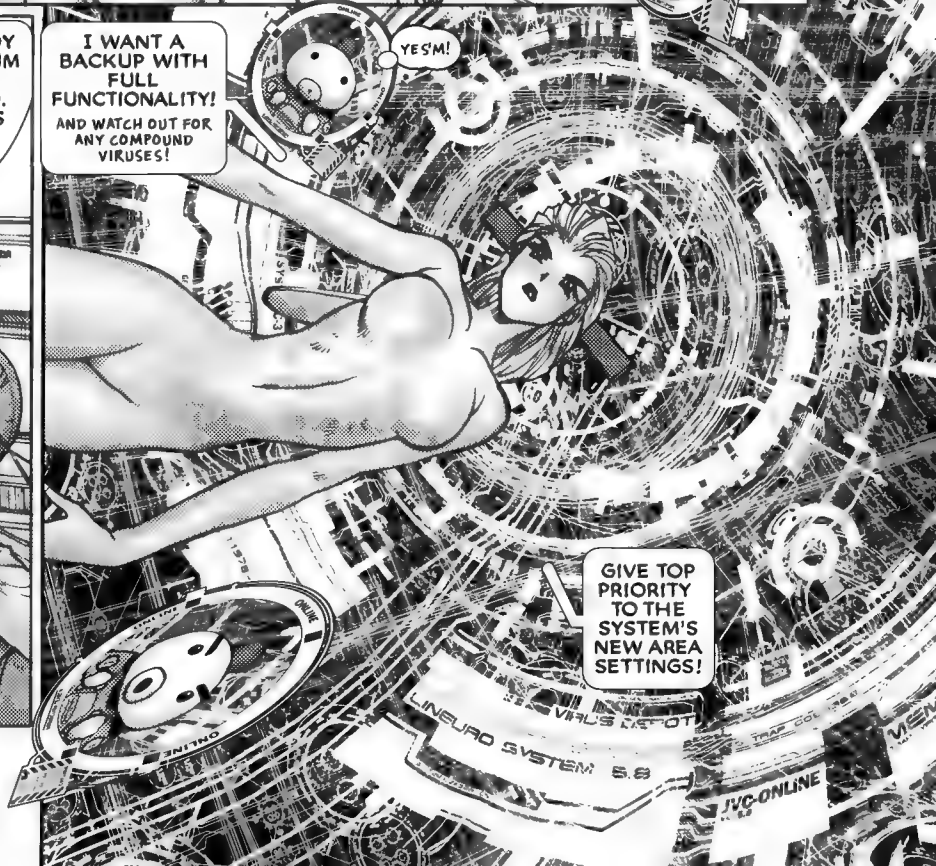
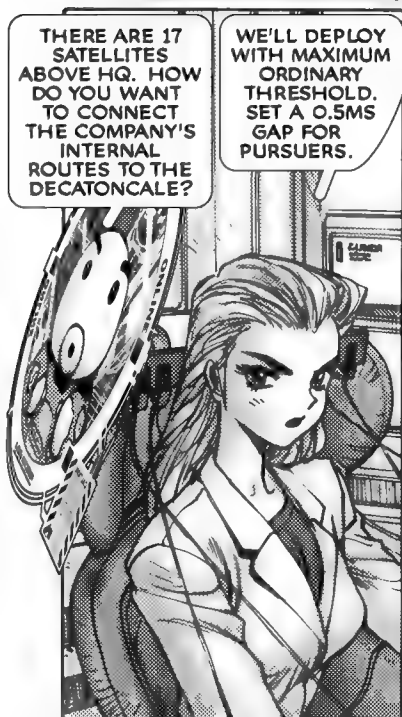


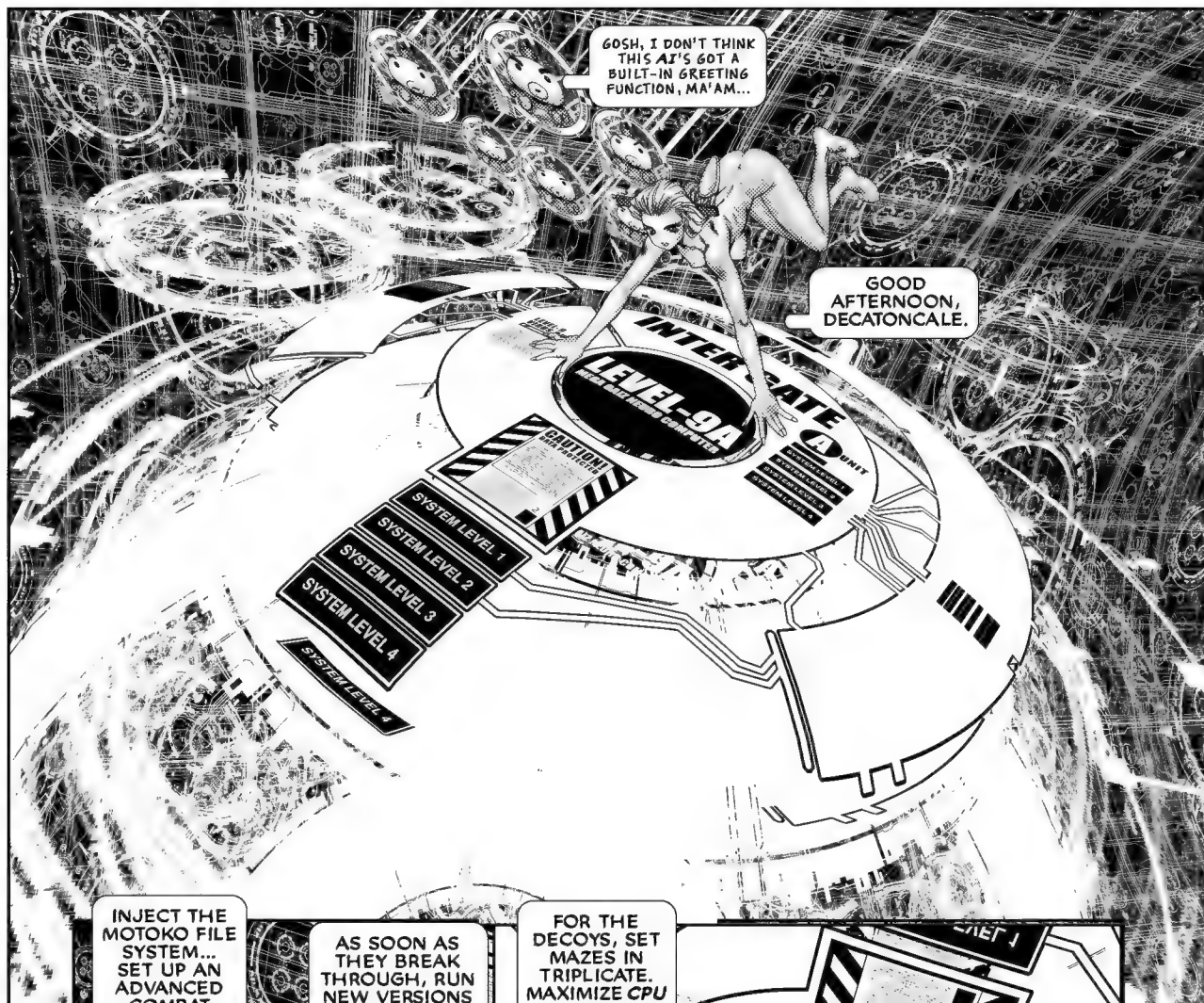


↑ COMPANY LAN TERMINAL

↑ HARDENED BARRIER & SURROGATE RESET BOX

DECATONCALE TERMINAL ↑





GOSH, I DON'T THINK THIS AI'S GOT A BUILT-IN GREETING FUNCTION, MA'AM...

GOOD AFTERNOON, DECATONCALE.

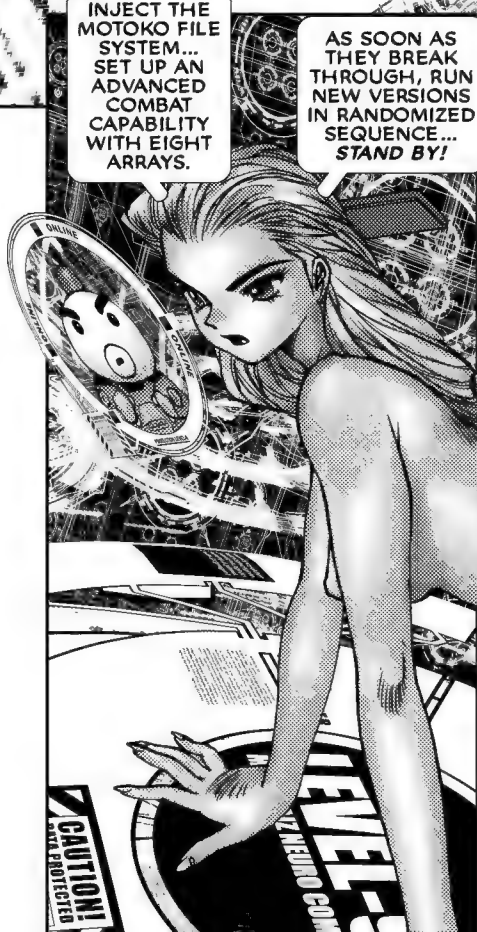
INJECT THE MOTOKO FILE SYSTEM... SET UP AN ADVANCED COMBAT CAPABILITY WITH EIGHT ARRAYS.

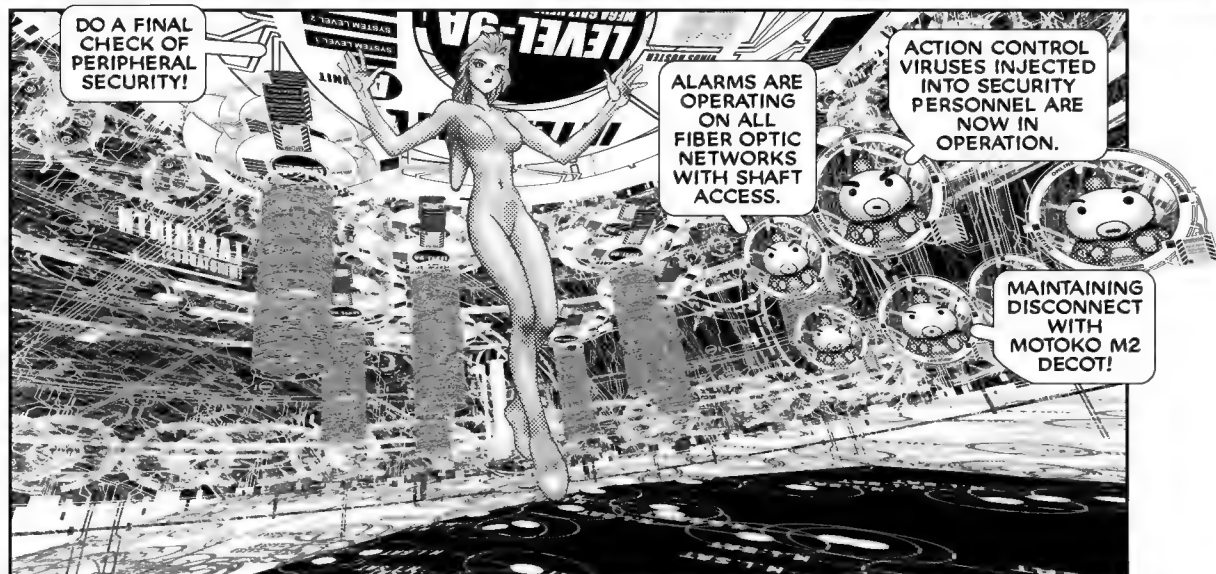
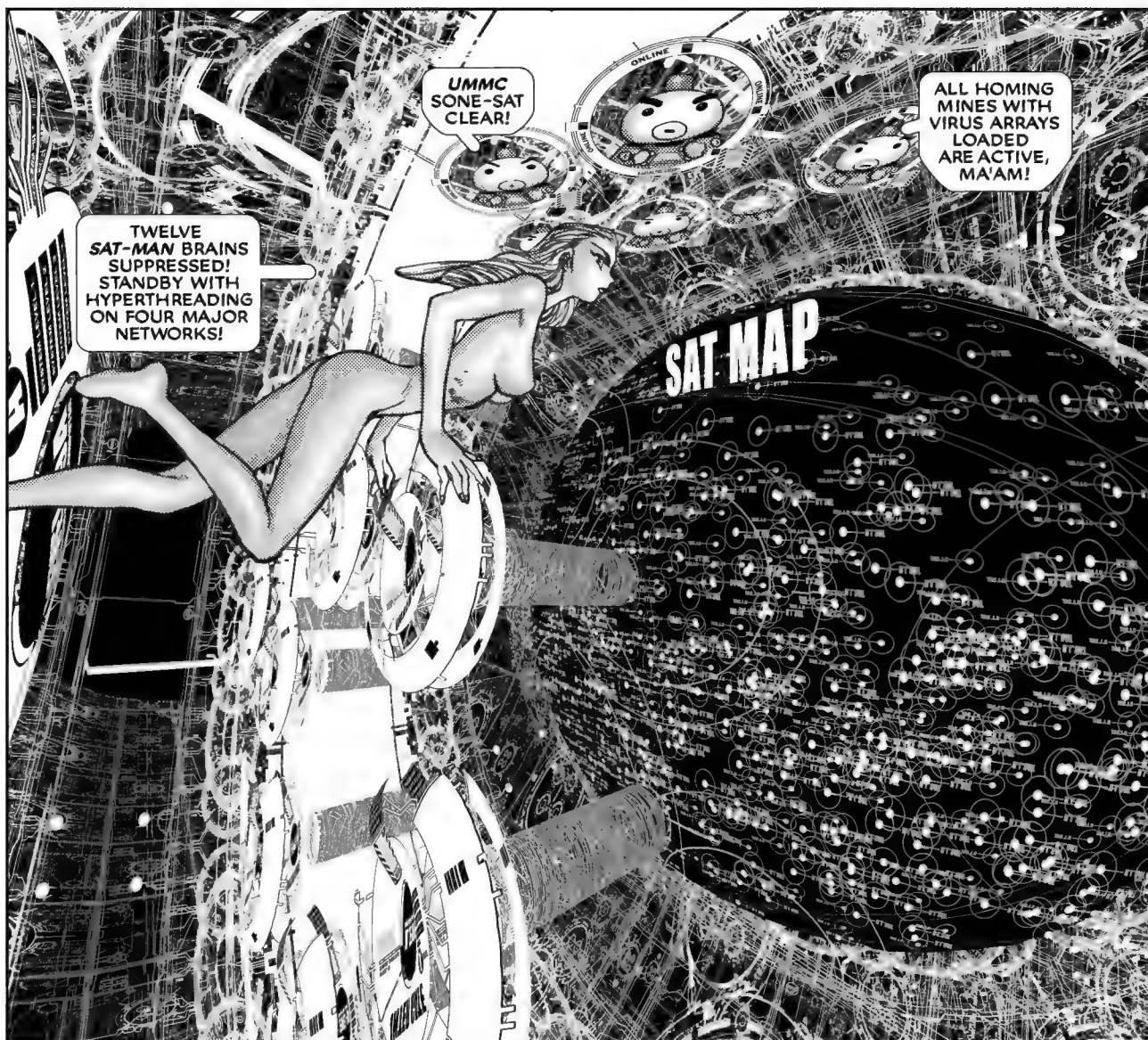
AS SOON AS THEY BREAK THROUGH, RUN NEW VERSIONS IN RANDOMIZED SEQUENCE... STAND BY!

FOR THE DECOYS, SET MAZES IN TRIPLICATE. MAXIMIZE CPU PROCESSING LOAD.

ASSUME WE'RE FACING MULTIPLE ENEMIES AND DISPERSE THE SETS... SPLIT UP INTO FOUR GROUPS AND ACTIVATE THRESHOLD TRIGGERS!

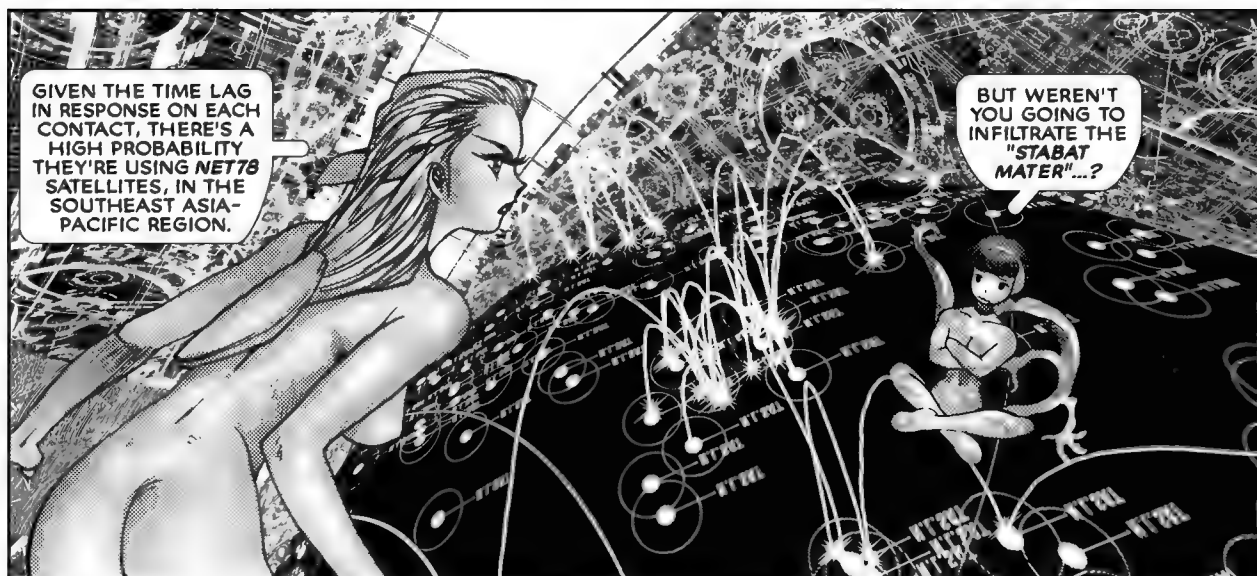
LINK TO ALL KNOWN SATELLITE SYSTEMS!





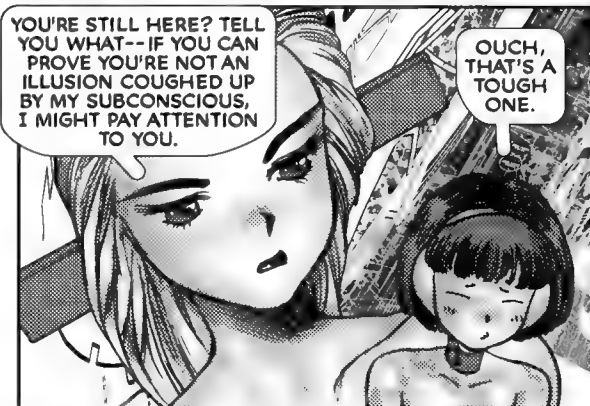
MOTOKO M2: Name of the other Motoko decot, the one who has been stopped by security.





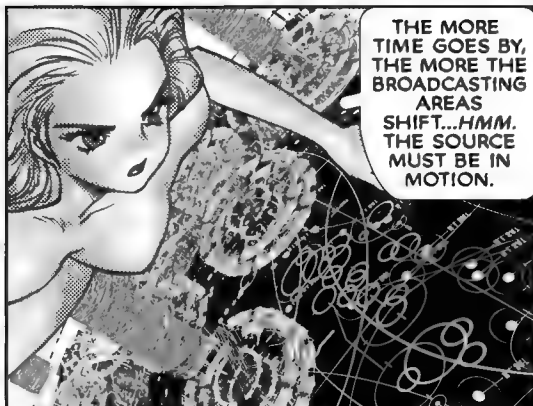
GIVEN THE TIME LAG
IN RESPONSE ON EACH
CONTACT, THERE'S A
HIGH PROBABILITY
THEY'RE USING **NET78**
SATELLITES, IN THE
SOUTHEAST ASIA-
PACIFIC REGION.

BUT WEREN'T
YOU GOING TO
INFILTRATE THE
"STABAT
MATER"...?

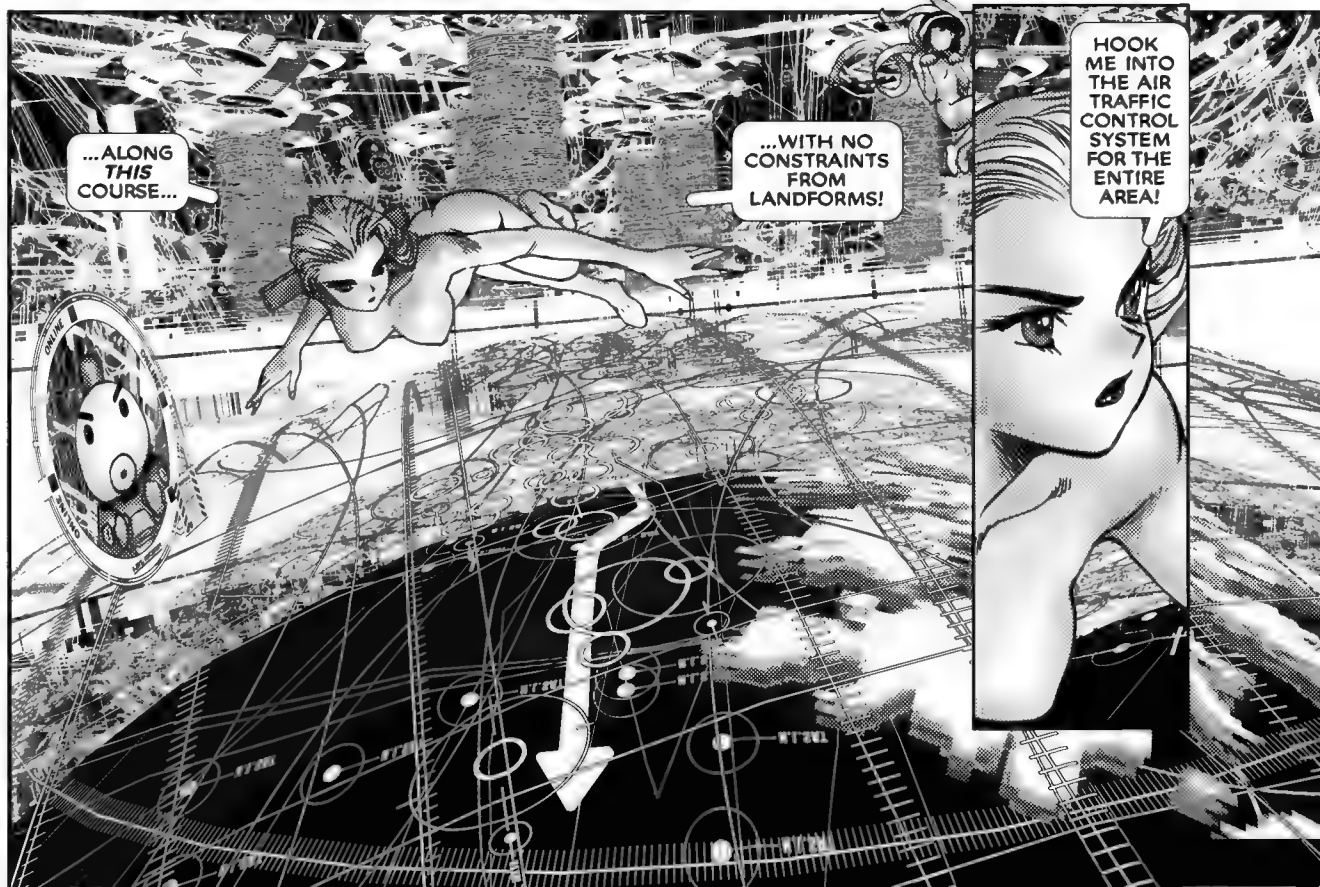


YOU'RE STILL HERE? TELL
YOU WHAT--IF YOU CAN
PROVE YOU'RE NOT AN
ILLUSION COUGHED UP
BY MY SUBCONSCIOUS,
I MIGHT PAY ATTENTION
TO YOU.

OUCH,
THAT'S A
TOUGH
ONE.



THE MORE
TIME GOES BY,
THE MORE THE
BROADCASTING
AREAS
SHIFT...HMM.
THE SOURCE
MUST BE IN
MOTION.



...ALONG
THIS
COURSE...

...WITH NO
CONSTRAINTS
FROM
LANDFORMS!

HOOK
ME INTO
THE AIR
TRAFFIC
CONTROL
SYSTEM
FOR THE
ENTIRE
AREA!



!

WHOA...
THIS GUY'S
BODY IS
SOAKED
IN DRUGS.

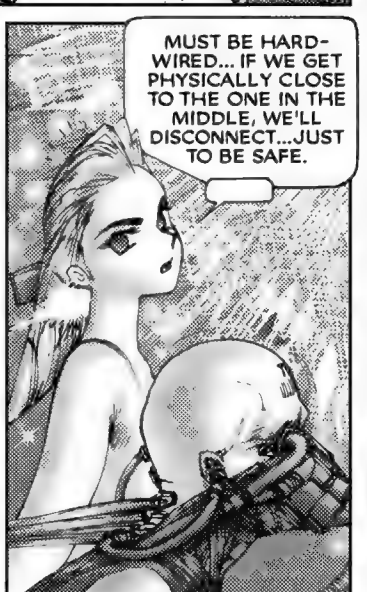
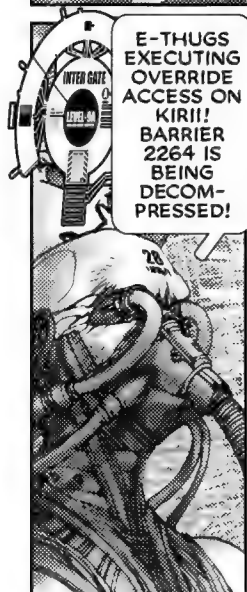
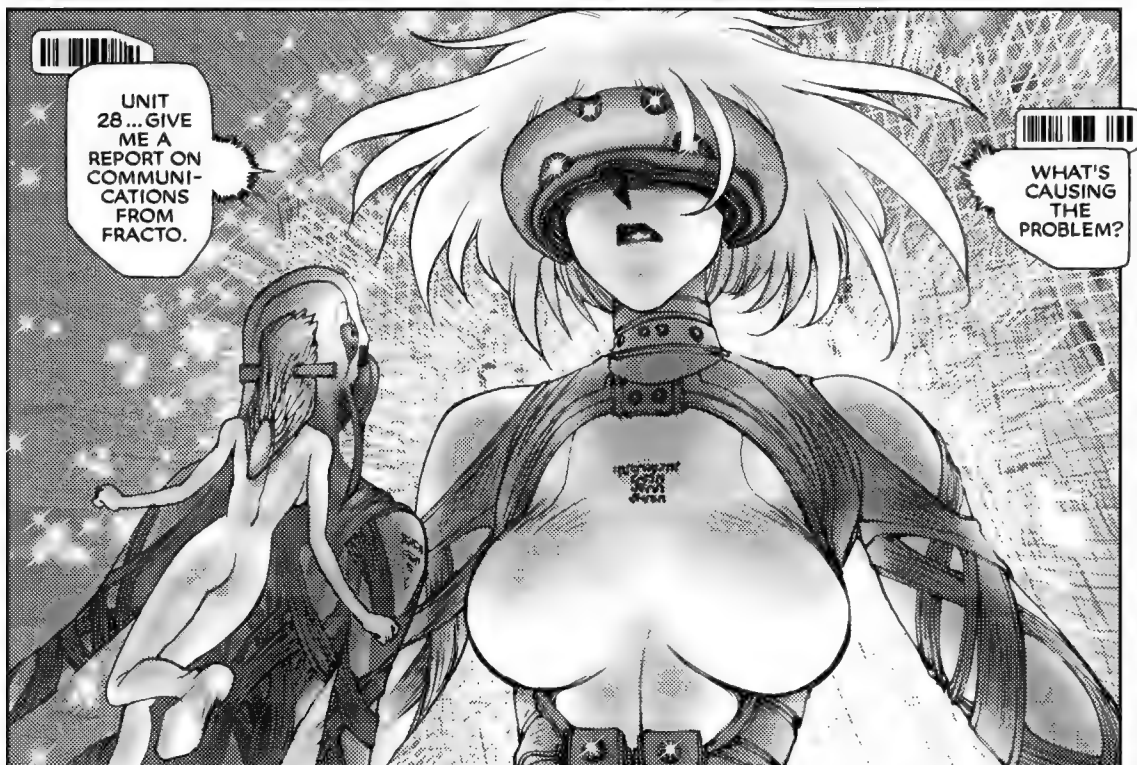
WAIT A
SEC... I FEEL
FAINT...

THE DRUG'S AN ACTH
SUPPRESSANT CALLED LCH250R.
I CAN'T TELL HOW MUCH IS
USED, THOUGH... APPLYING
VARIABLE CORRECTION BIAS
TO YOUR LINK.
HANG IN THERE...

HMM... AS
EXPECTED,
THEY PUT A
LOT OF
MONEY
INTO THIS
FACILITY.

CURRENTLY
ESTIMATING SITE
LOCATION...
CANDIDATE AREA
IS SHRINKING...





TOTAL-BARRIER: Refers to a state wherein independent intercept devices are physically attached to the main system address, and multiple types of attack-barriers are injected in response to any access from the outside. Creates a situation analogous to a "hollow porcupine." Once activated, a total-barrier can't be deactivated from outside with software; instead, it has to be turned off with an internal physical switch.

STAGE: Refers to the e-brain space that the character in the second panel is overseeing and deploying. May sound like a game environment, but it's really like a dramatic space allowing participation and viewing. It's a type of two-way movie space. Motoko is dealing here with Stabat Mater, which (although this is not her primary concern) is actually a famous entertainment (religious) organization physically located in Singapore.

MILLENNIUM...?
STABAT MATER'S
CYBERDOME
ARTIST?

WE HAVE AN INCIDENT
OCCURRING IN TACTICAL ZONE
MP15. FIVE LONG-HAUL TRUCKS
HAVE BEEN LOCATED IN A
FIVE-KILOMETER RADIUS, BROAD-
CASTING AN ILLEGAL HIGH-POWER
WI-FI NETWORK. WE ARE
SUPPRESSING THEM AND MOVING
IMMEDIATELY TO THE SITE.

muinnelliM

HMM...

I APPRECIATE
THE
INVITATION,
BUT WHERE'S
MR. KIRII?

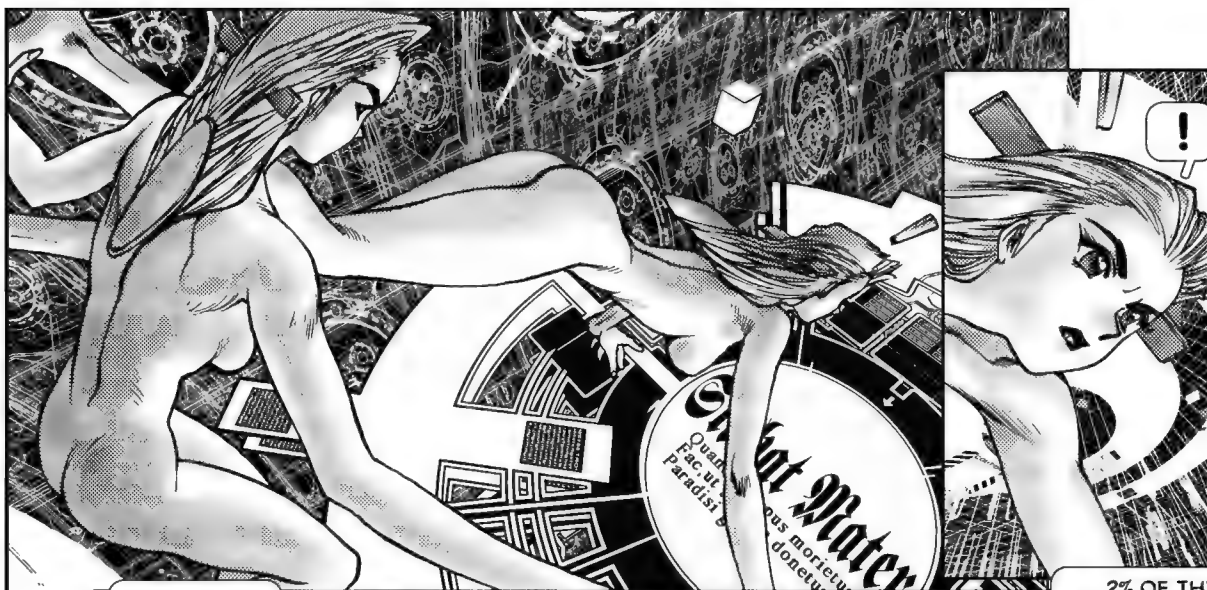
YIKES! THIS
LAYOUT LOOKS LIKE
THE FAMOUSLY
EFFECTIVE
SANADAMARU
DEFENSES OF
OSAKA CASTLE
IN MEDIEVAL
DAYS!

MOTOKO KIRII

AH...THIS IS
THE SAME
GUY WHO WAS
SLEEPING
NEXT DOOR
ON THE
AIRSHIP...

BARCODE

At this point, Motoko can't see the entire system, because she hasn't yet infiltrated Millennium. She only has access to the information that the airship pilot (Fracto, a.k.a. Unit 28) has, but Stabat Mater consists of more than what she can currently view through him. I confess that I probably should have given Millennium a more feminine-sounding name, such as "Millennia" or "Millenietta."



ENEMY NOW
DEPLOYING 2⁹
TYPES OF
ATTACK
BARRIERS AT
LEVEL 1.

CURRENT ARRAY
PATTERN YIELDS AN
86% MATCH WITH
PREVIOUS ONE.

405 TYPES ARE MOBILE
AND DESTRUCTIVE.
82 USE COMBINED PARTS.
27 ARE EITHER BOMBS
OR DECOYS.

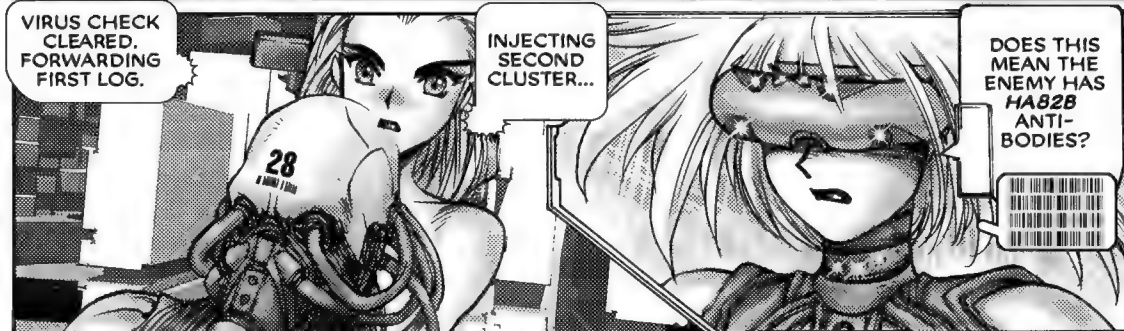
2% OF THE
OUTERMOST WALLS
OF DECATONCALE
HAVE BEEN
PENETRATED. TOTAL
NEUTRALIZATION
ACHIEVED AT LEVEL
TWO. CURRENTLY
TESTING...



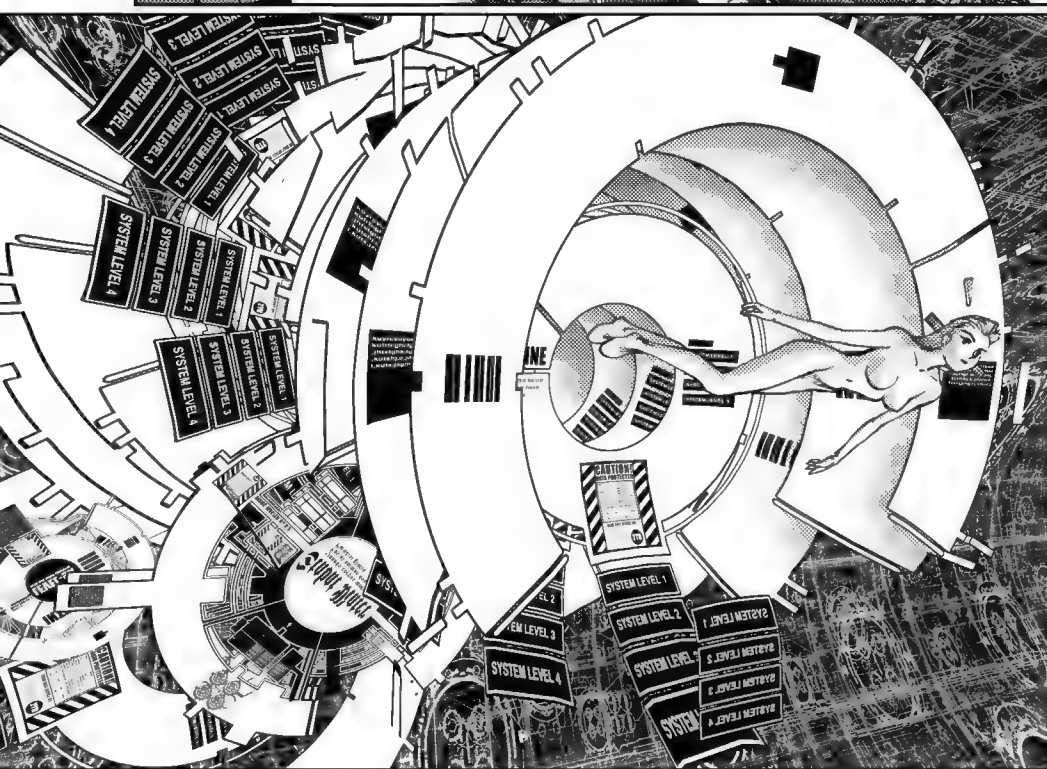
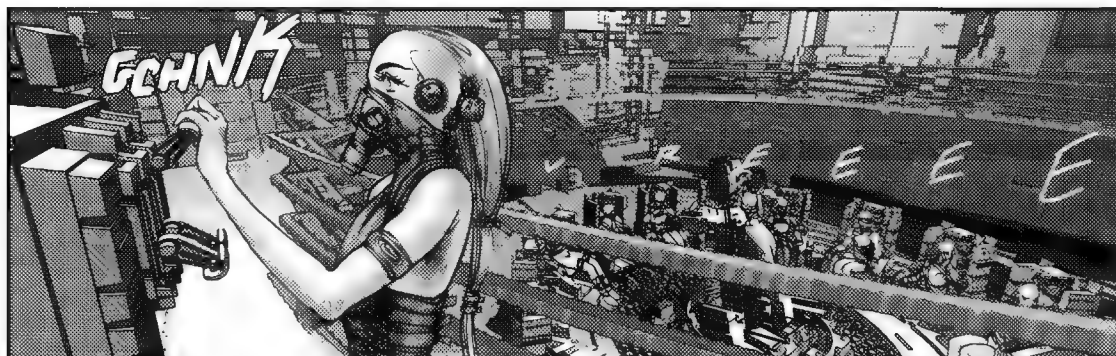
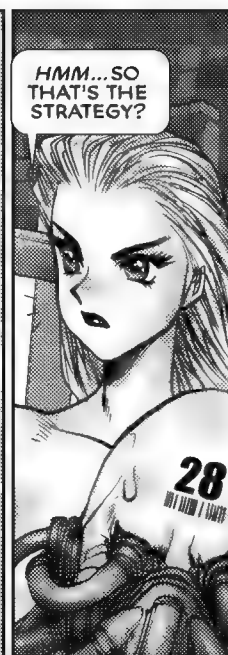
VIRUS CHECK
CLEARED.
FORWARDING
FIRST LOG.

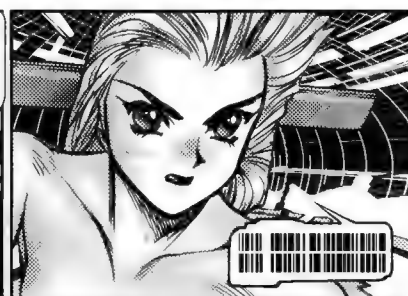
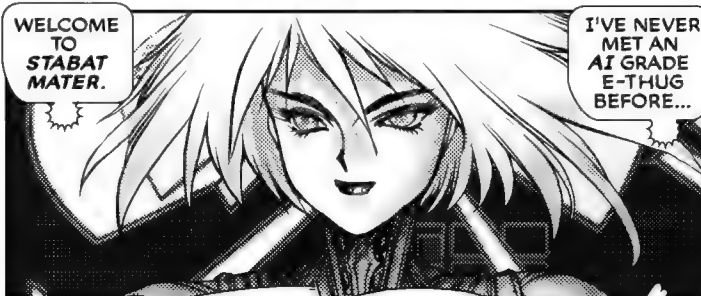
INJECTING
SECOND
CLUSTER...

DOES THIS
MEAN THE
ENEMY HAS
HA82B
ANTI-
BODIES?



Unit 28 is using retinal projection to see Kirii's log as-is, visually. It's hard to see from the drawing, but there is a hardware disconnect, so it's difficult to access Unit 28 via Kirii from outside the system. As invited by the enemy, Motoko is sending a copy of herself into the Kirii route and working to destroy part of the total-barrier in the line connecting Unit 28 and the stage.





Millennium usually makes his/herself appear in this type of form, out of habit, but Motoko doesn't appear to Millennium the way she's depicted here. Millennium is only aware of Motoko's existence. Sort of like being aware of a ghost in the darkness of the night....

AFTERNOON...
I'VE COME TO
RETURN THE
PRESENT.

THE ONE THAT
REJECTED ANY
ATTEMPT TO READ
IT... I'VE BEEN
DYING TO KNOW
HOW THE SENDER
WOULD RESPOND.

AAH...BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT
IT'D BE ACCEPTED IN AN
EJECTION SPACE AND THAT
JUST ONE DECOY WOULD BE
SACRIFICED. I WANTED TO
SEE SOME MORE ORIGINAL
ANTIBODIES USED.

WAIT A
SEC...THIS
EJECTION
SPACE
IS--?!?

ISN'T THIS
THE SAME
RESPONSE
AS THE
MISTRESS?
NOW
UPGRADING
TACTICAL
ARRAYS...

ENEMY
ATTACK-
BARRIERS
HAVE
PENETRATED
LAYER TWO!
WE HAVE
NEUTRALIZED
THEM AT
LAYER
THREE!

IT MUST BE
A VIRUS THAT
COMBINES
AND
ACTIVATES
WITH THE
SEARCH DATA
IN THIS
ROOM!

WHAT
TH--?!



GET ME A REPORT ON THE E-THUG RESPONSE LOG.

UNITS 16 AND 32 ARE CONTAMINATED BY UNIDENTIFIED VIRUSES! FREEZING THEM... NOW!

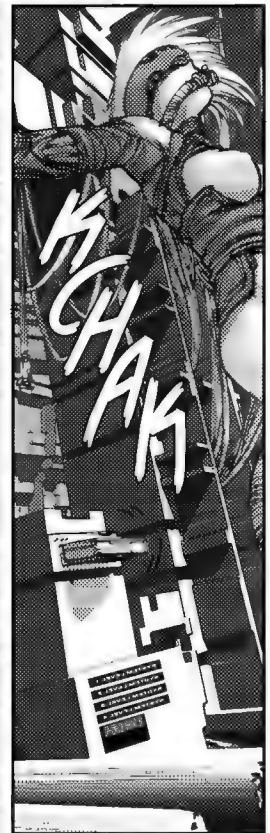
VIRUS CHECK CLEARED... FORWARDING RESPONSE LOG.

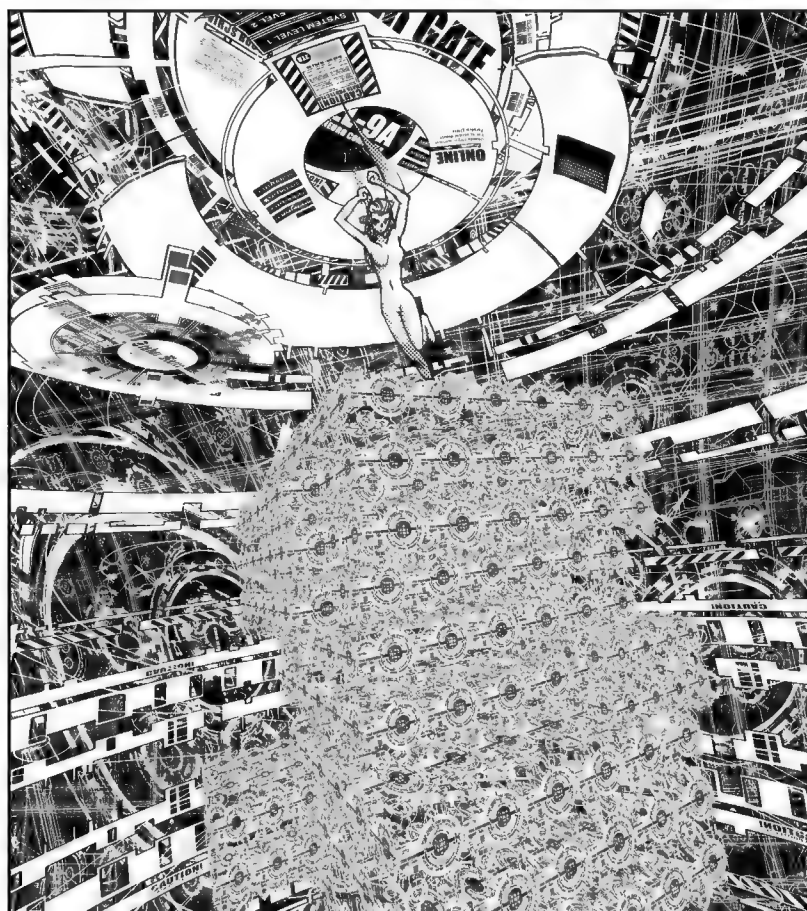
UNIT 28



THE ANTIBODIES ARE DISINTEGRATING! HAVE THEY BEEN COUNTER-INFECTED BY A VIRUS...?

FREEZE







HEY! IS THIS THING PLANNING TO FRY ITS FRIENDS, TOO?

SUCH A TEMPER IT HAS! AND MAKING DANGEROUS ASSUMPTIONS, TOO... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

LOOKS LIKE THIS IS AS FAR AS I CAN GO ON THE KIRII ROUTE.

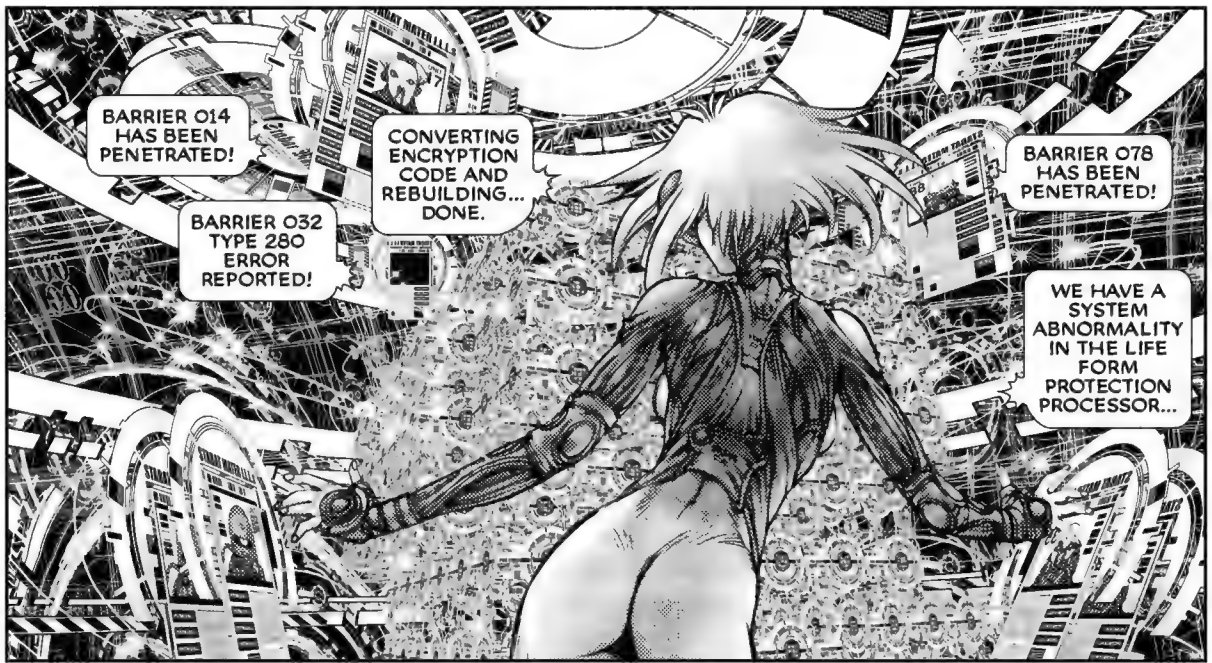
MAYBE I SHOULD JUST DROP IT...

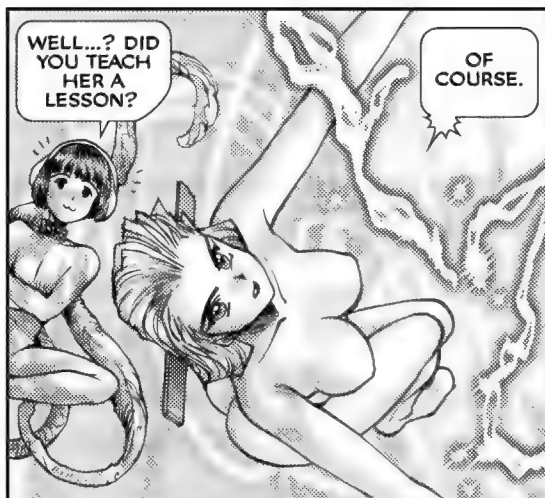
?! I'M GETTING AN INSTANT RESPONSE TO BARRIERS... I WONDER IF THIS IS ONE OF THOSE MULTIGATE-CLASS AIs I'VE HEARD ABOUT?

REVERSE PROBE TEAM, PREPARE FOR INTERCEPTS! STRENGTHEN DECOYS!

DEPLOY ALL VARIETIES OF LATENT VIRUSES IN BARRIERS AND ISOLATE INFECTED PORTIONS.

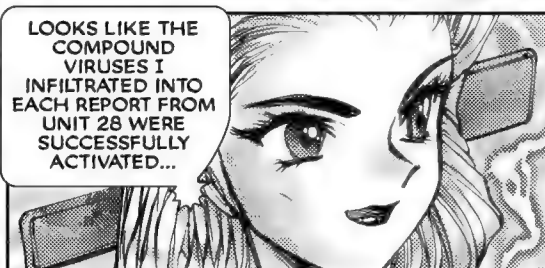
Using the "reverse probe" referred to here involves identifying or estimating the location of enemy hardware and preparing a physical attack on it. Wi-fi terror, land-line terror, or satellite-hijacking tactics may be used against enemy hardware for harassment purposes where it is presumed to exist, even without a positive identification. Since Millennium's opponent is a "Multigate Class" AI, and a huge investment has presumably been made in hardware defenses, she knows full well that it's not enough to simply use multiple remote decoys.



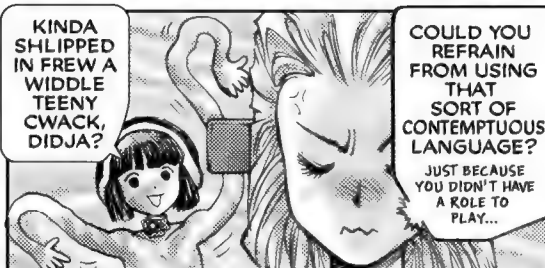


WELL...? DID YOU TEACH HER A LESSON?

OF COURSE.



LOOKS LIKE THE COMPOUND VIRUSES I INFILTRATED INTO EACH REPORT FROM UNIT 28 WERE SUCCESSFULLY ACTIVATED...



KINDA SHLIPPED IN FREW A WIDDLE TEENY CWACK, DIDJA?

COULD YOU REFRAIN FROM USING THAT SORT OF CONTEMPTUOUS LANGUAGE?

JUST BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY...



NO ROLE TO PLAY? WELL, WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT... HEH HEH HEH...

LEVEL-SIX BARRIERS RELEASED... STAND BY FOR ACCESS!

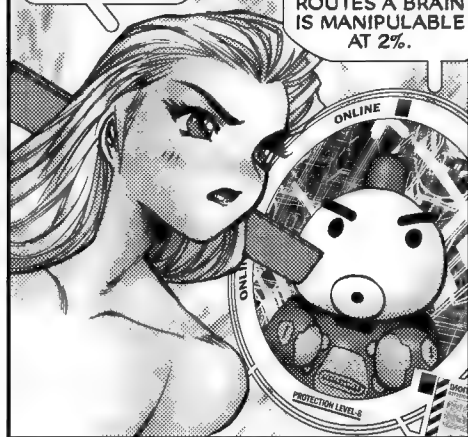


JUST TO BE SURE, CHECK THE PERIMETER.

GIVEN THE RESPONSE RATE, THERE'S A 98% PROBABILITY THAT THIS BRAIN IS THE SOURCE, MA'AM.

98%...? HMM... THEN I'M WORRIED ABOUT THAT REMAINING 2%. ANALYSIS...?

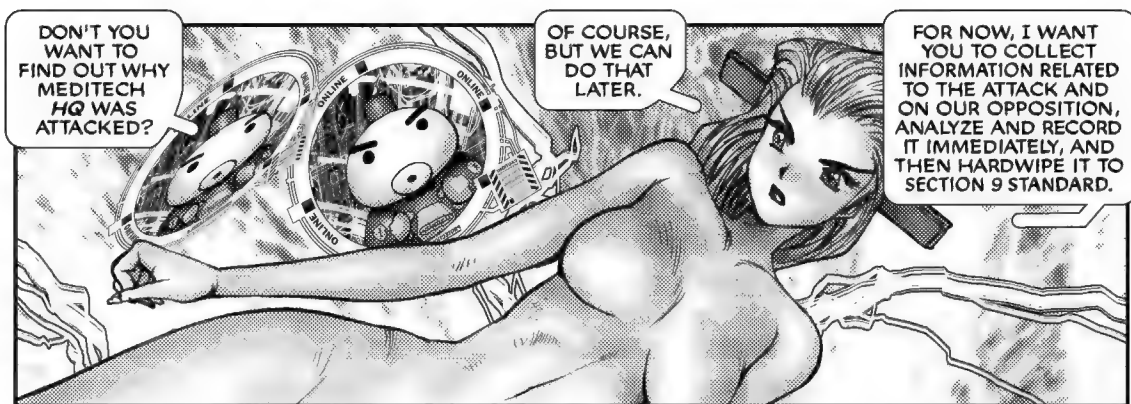
THERE ARE THREE DECATONCALES IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, SO WITH EIGHT ROUTES A BRAIN IS MANIPULABLE AT 2%.



IN THAT CASE, START WITH ALL EXTERNAL CONNECTIONS, HARDWARE MAPPING, POWER-USE DISTRIBUTION...

... AND SEARCH FOR ANY ANTI-IMMUNE FACTORS AROUND THE GHOST LINE.





DON'T YOU WANT TO FIND OUT WHY MEDITECH HQ WAS ATTACKED?

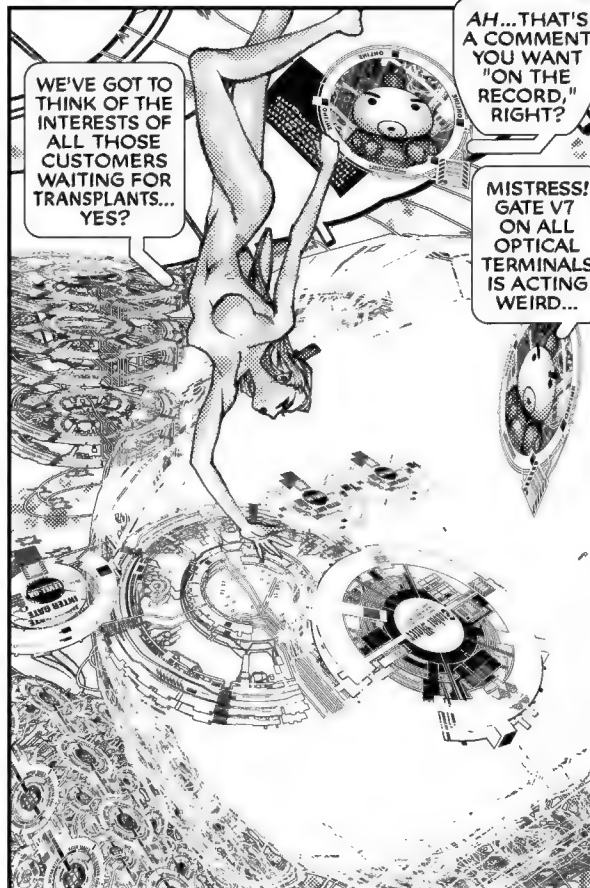
OF COURSE, BUT WE CAN DO THAT LATER.

FOR NOW, I WANT YOU TO COLLECT INFORMATION RELATED TO THE ATTACK AND ON OUR OPPOSITION, ANALYZE AND RECORD IT IMMEDIATELY, AND THEN HARDWIPE IT TO SECTION 9 STANDARD.



BUT IF WE DESTROY ANY MOTIVATION-ELEMENTS AT LEVEL SIX, IT GETS HARD TO MAINTAIN INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY...

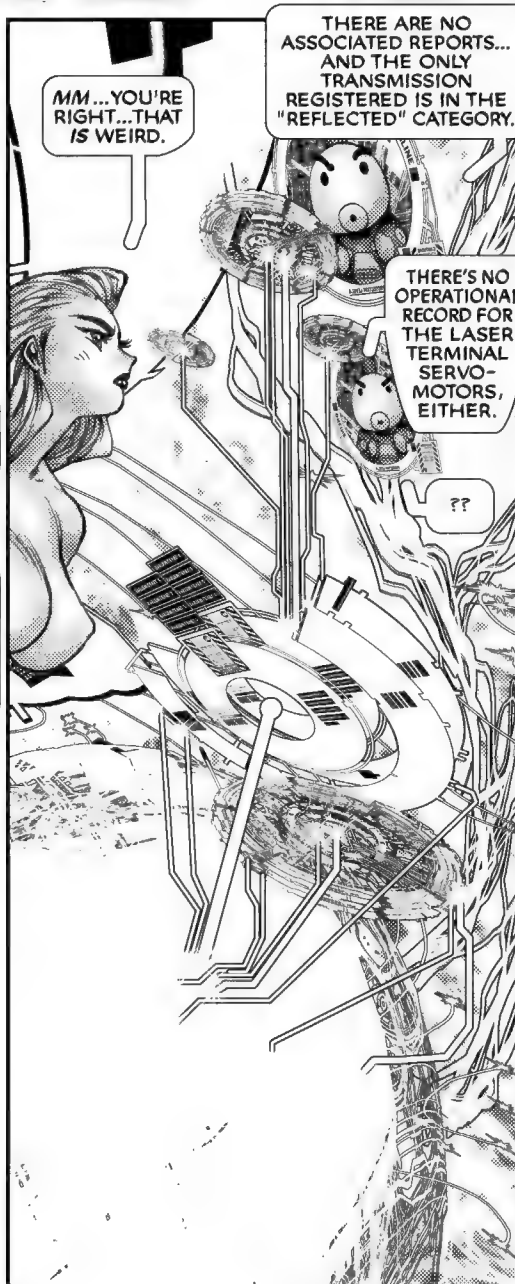
AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?



WE'VE GOT TO THINK OF THE INTERESTS OF ALL THOSE CUSTOMERS WAITING FOR TRANSPLANTS... YES?

AH...THAT'S A COMMENT YOU WANT "ON THE RECORD," RIGHT?

MISTRESS! GATE V7 ON ALL OPTICAL TERMINALS IS ACTING WEIRD...

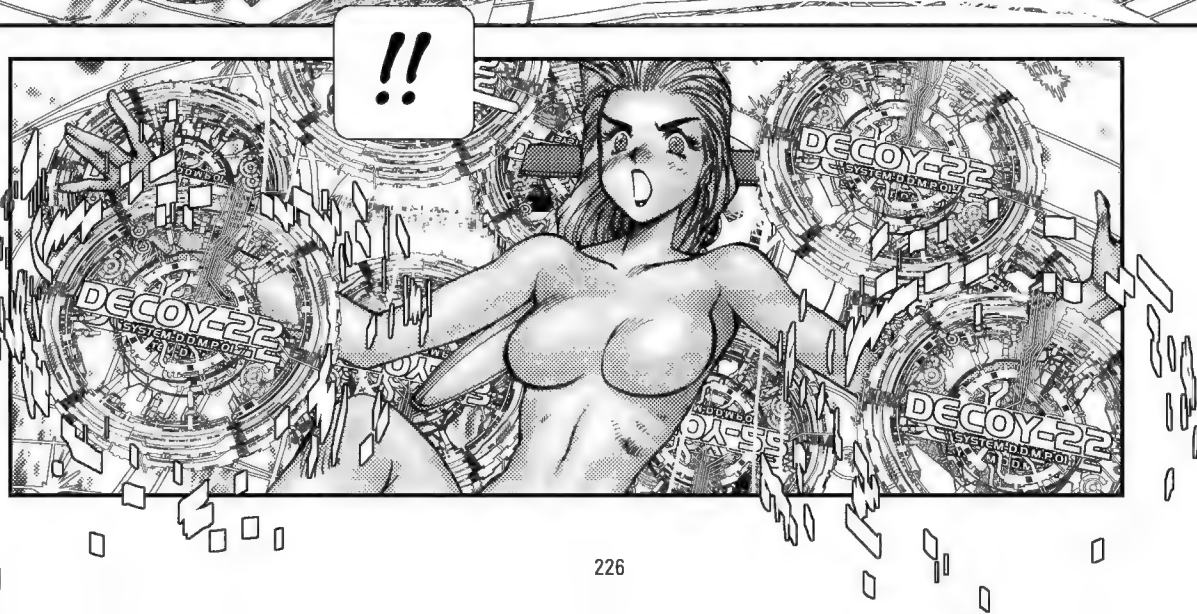
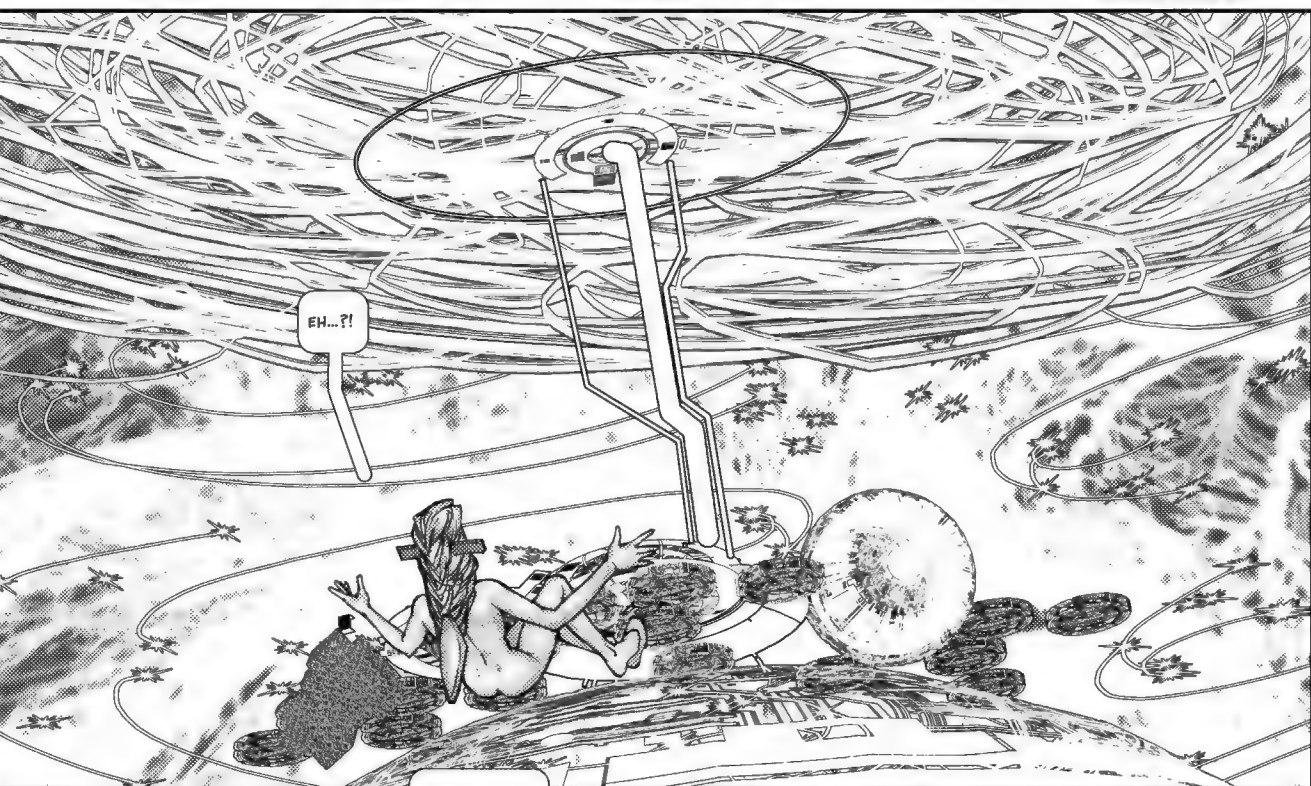
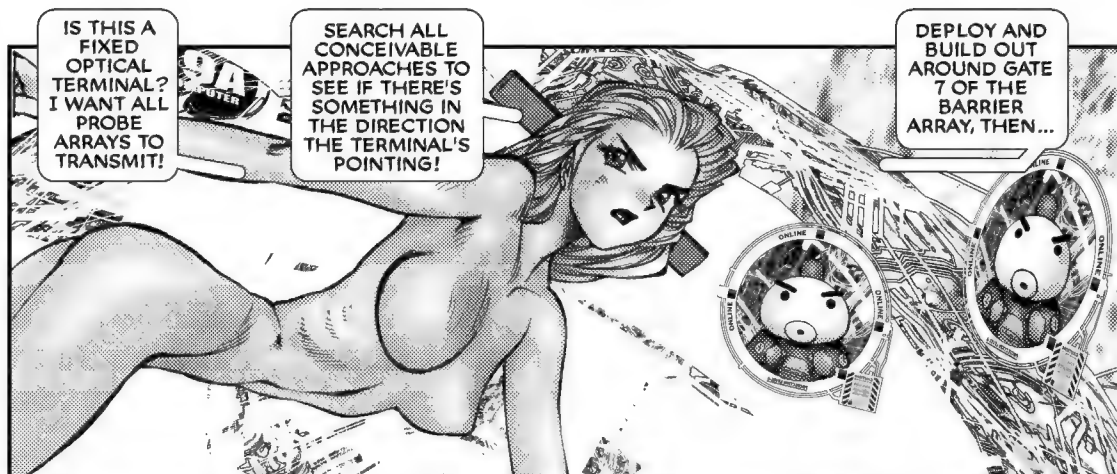


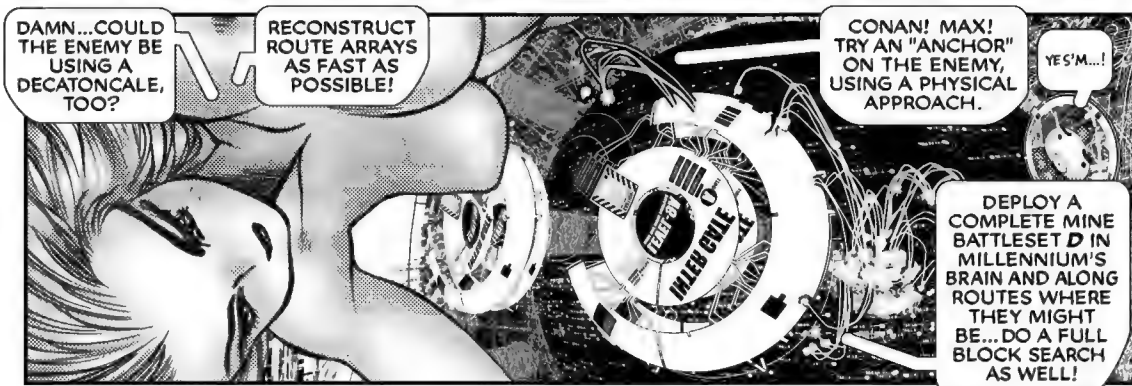
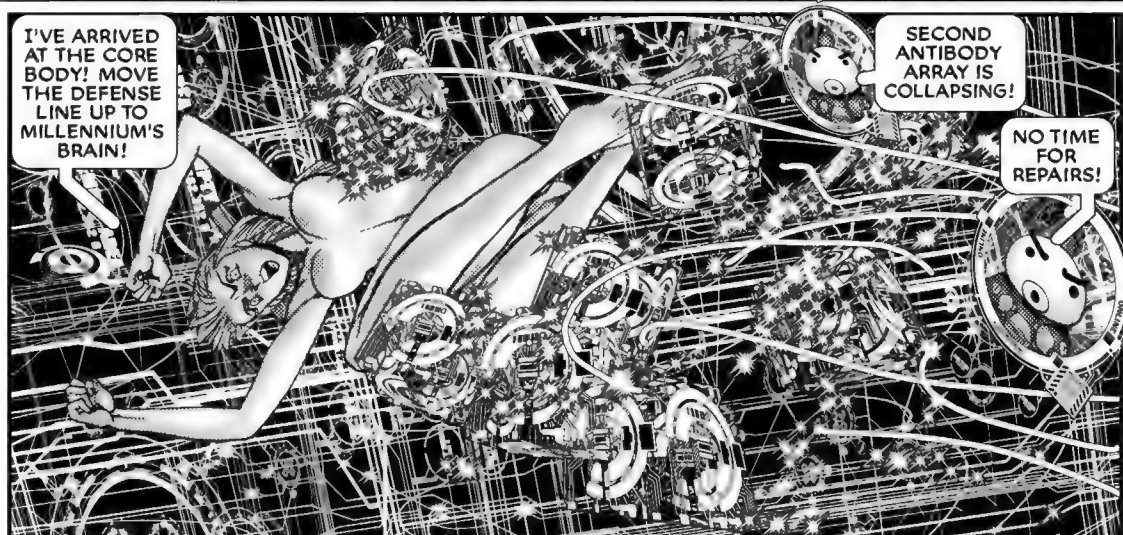
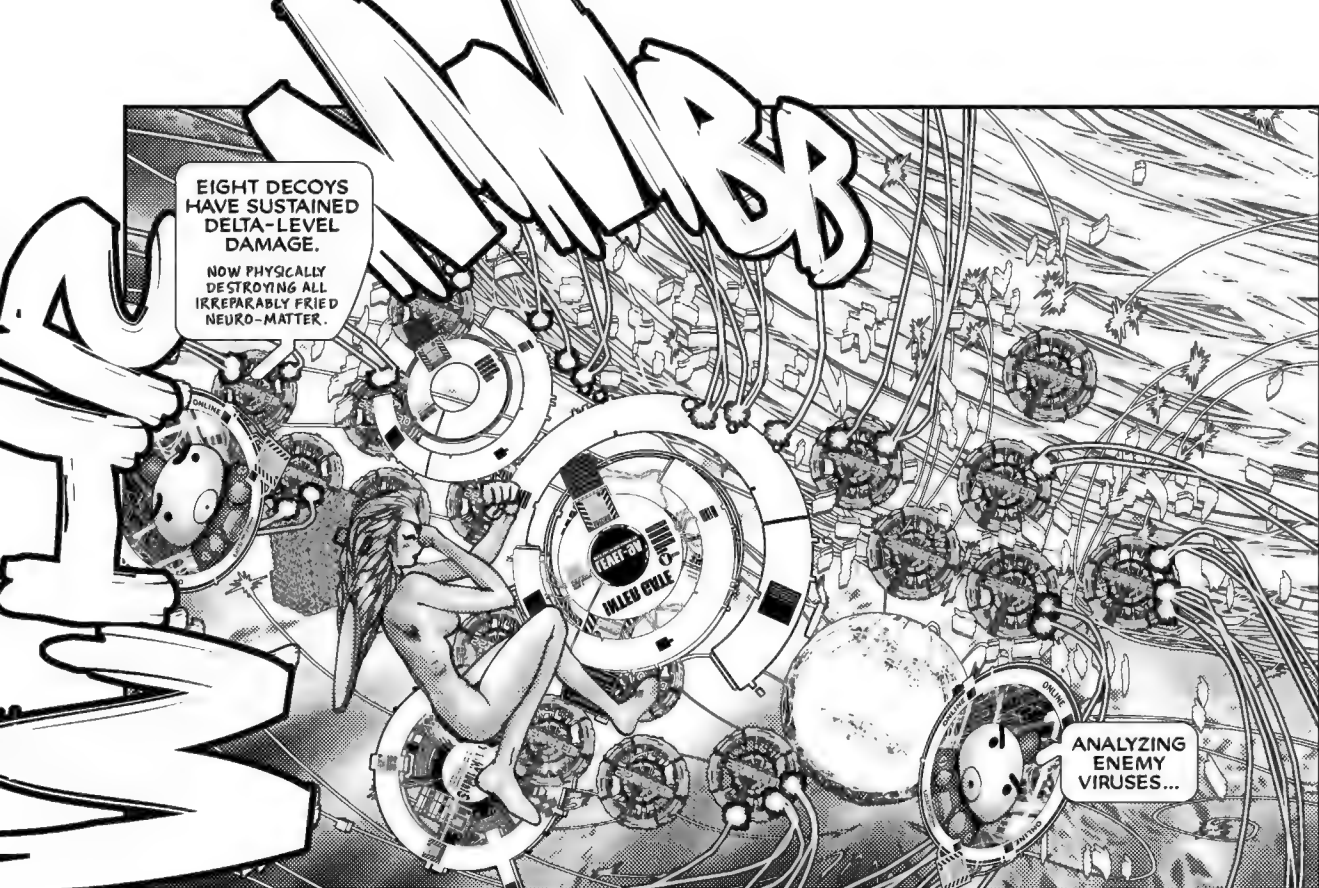
MM...YOU'RE RIGHT...THAT IS WEIRD.

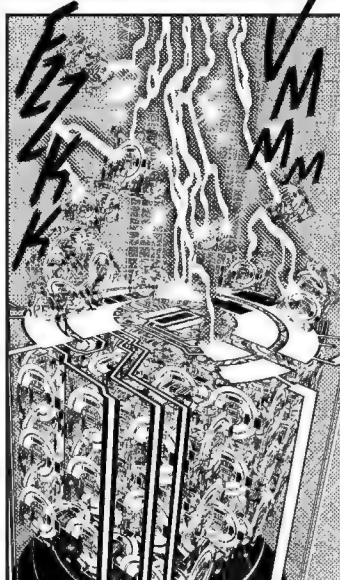
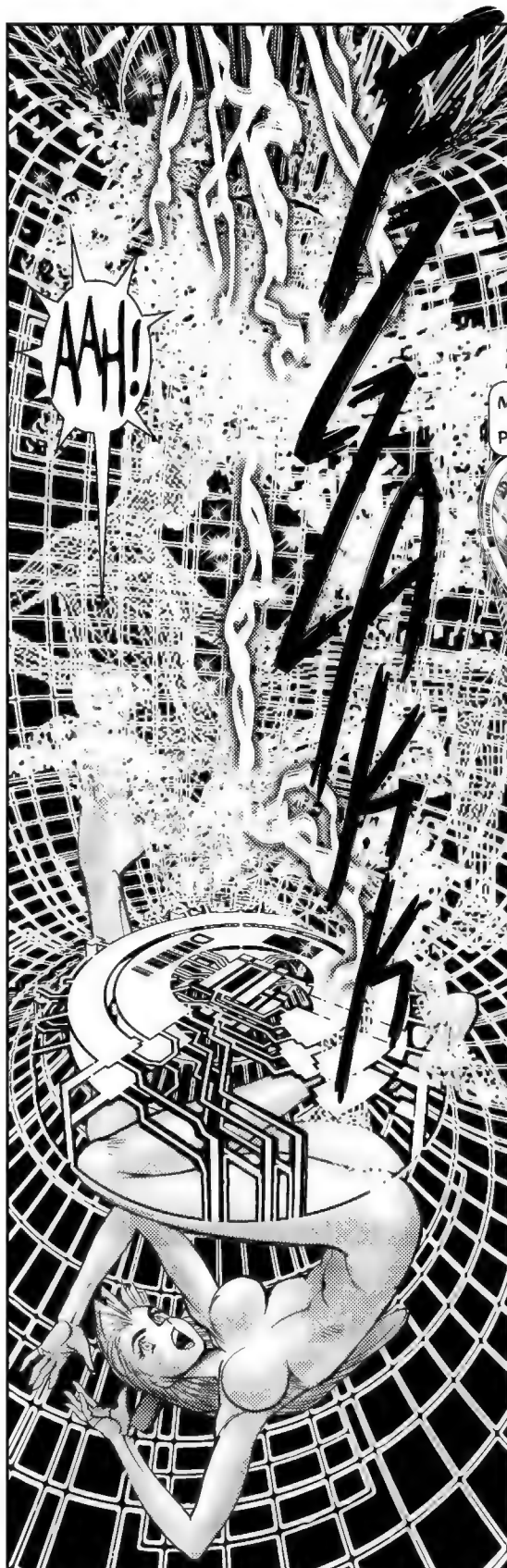
THERE ARE NO ASSOCIATED REPORTS... AND THE ONLY TRANSMISSION REGISTERED IS IN THE "REFLECTED" CATEGORY.

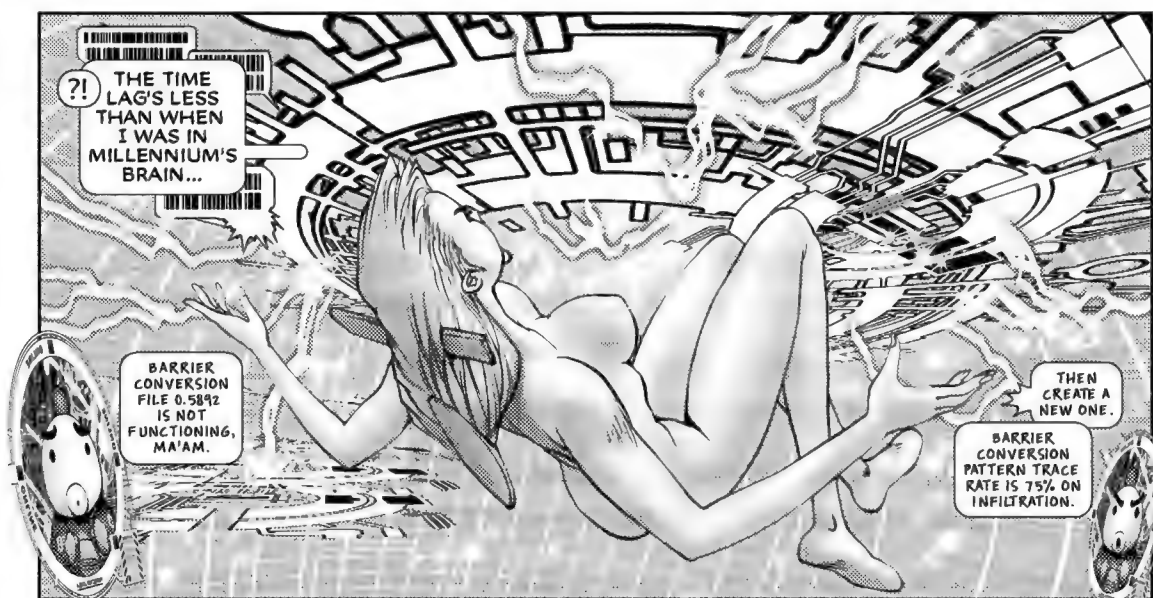
THERE'S NO OPERATIONAL RECORD FOR THE LASER TERMINAL SERVO-MOTORS, EITHER.

??









?! THE TIME LAG'S LESS THAN WHEN I WAS IN MILLENNIUM'S BRAIN...

BARRIER CONVERSION FILE 0.5892 IS NOT FUNCTIONING, MA'AM.

THEN CREATE A NEW ONE.

BARRIER CONVERSION PATTERN TRACE RATE IS 75% ON INFILTRATION.



NO RELAYING MEANS THE ENEMY COULD BE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY!

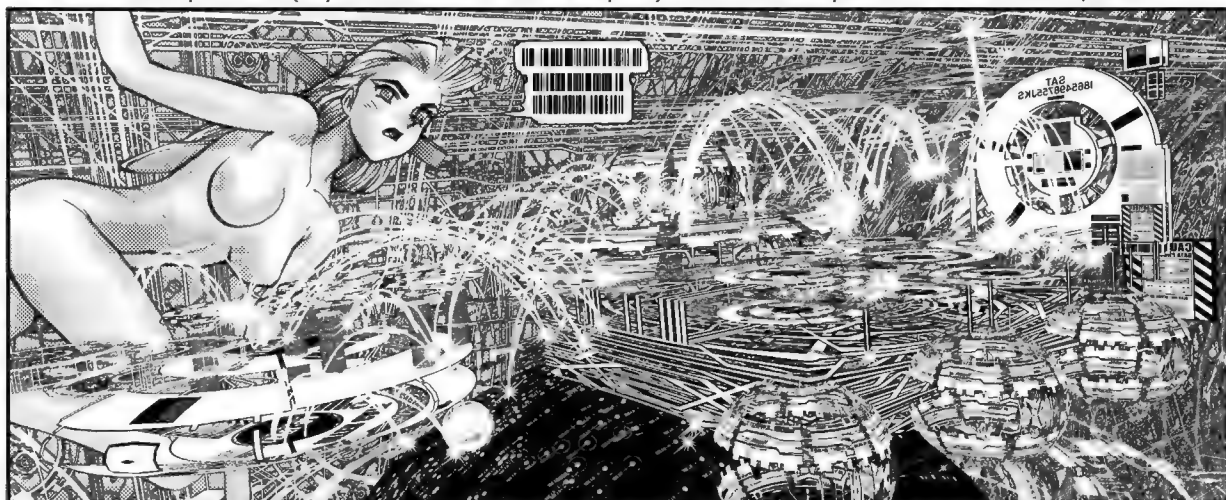
COULD IT BE HEADQUARTERS?
NO...MAYBE PERIPHERAL SPACE?
OR THE OCEAN?
WAIT...HANG ON...



I BET IT'S IN A DIRECT LINE UP OR DOWN FROM THE SATELLITE'S POSITION!

NO SHUTTLES OR SPACE STATIONS ARE ON RECORD IN THAT LOCATION... I'LL REAL-TIME SEARCH USING A TERRESTRIAL OBSERVATORY.

TWENTY-EIGHT SATELLITES ARE CURRENTLY ABOVE HQ... HMM...THREE ATTACK SATELLITES... I CAN USE THESE.



!! MY MINES ARE BEING MODIFIED!



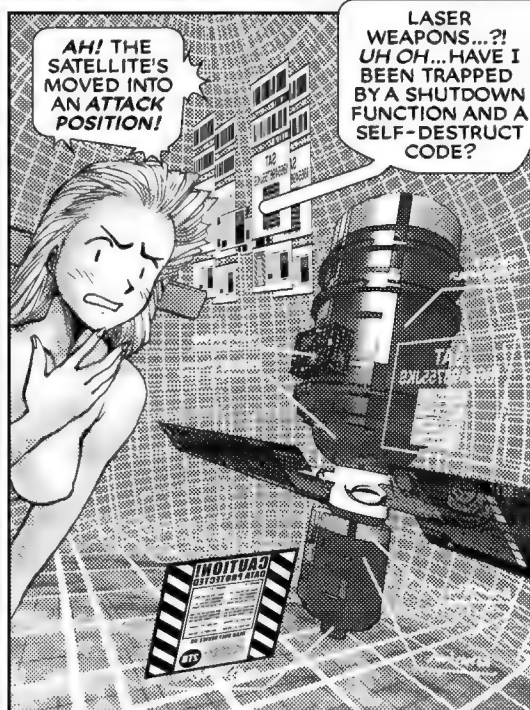
THE ENEMY APPEARS TO BE ACCESSING THE SAME SATELLITE!

I HATE IT WHEN SOMEONE CONTROLS THE SPACE ABOVE ME!

WE'RE GONNA HAVE A HEAD-ON COLLISION...

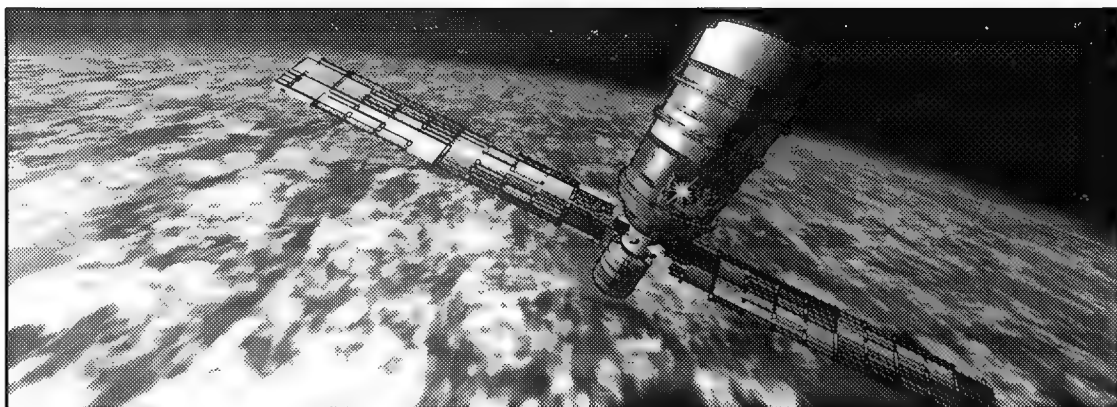


THE ENEMY'S ACTING LIKE A MIRROR, BUT THERE MUST BE SOME WAY I CAN GET BACK AT IT...



AH! THE SATELLITE'S MOVED INTO AN ATTACK POSITION!

LASER WEAPONS...?! UH OH...HAVE I BEEN TRAPPED BY A SHUTDOWN FUNCTION AND A SELF-DESTRUCT CODE?



LET'S SEE... LET'S TRY INJECTING A MASTER SHUTDOWN CODE WITH A RANDOM ASSORTMENT OF VIRUSES AND MINES...

Stopping functions. Recalculating checksum.

INJECTING EVOLVED ANTIBODIES INTO SATELLITES... SETTING NEW PASSWORD FOR ATTITUDE CONTROL... WE HAVE A DISTURBANCE IN THE MAZE!

OH, NO!

OPEN A NEW UNIDIRECTIONAL ROUTE VIA MILLENNIUM THROUGH ONE OF THOSE TRUCKS WITH THE ILLEGAL-STRENGTH WI-FI!

INJECT A COMPOUND VIRUS INTO THE ATTACK-- ONE THAT USES ENEMY ANTIBODIES AS ITS OWN PARTS!

B SET VIRUS ARRAY HAS BEEN NEUTRALIZED...

MILLENNIUM IS BEING SCANNED... BARRIERS ARE NOT WORKING!

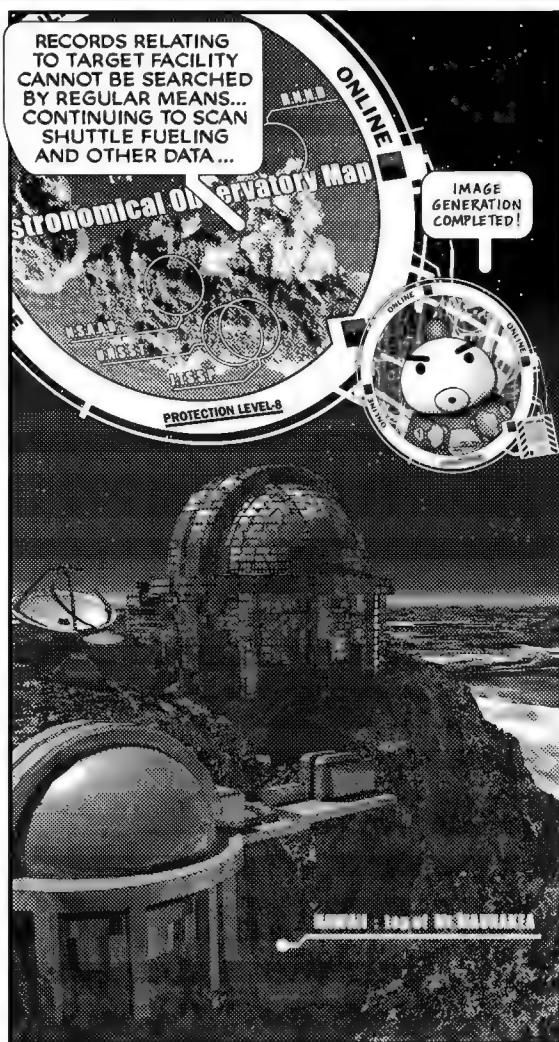
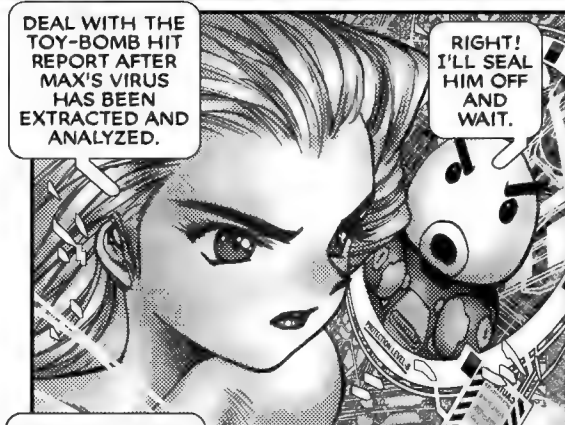
THE TRUCK'S BEEN DETECTED?! WHAT ABOUT THE BUILDING'S SECURITY NETWORK AND SPY SATELLITE MASKING?

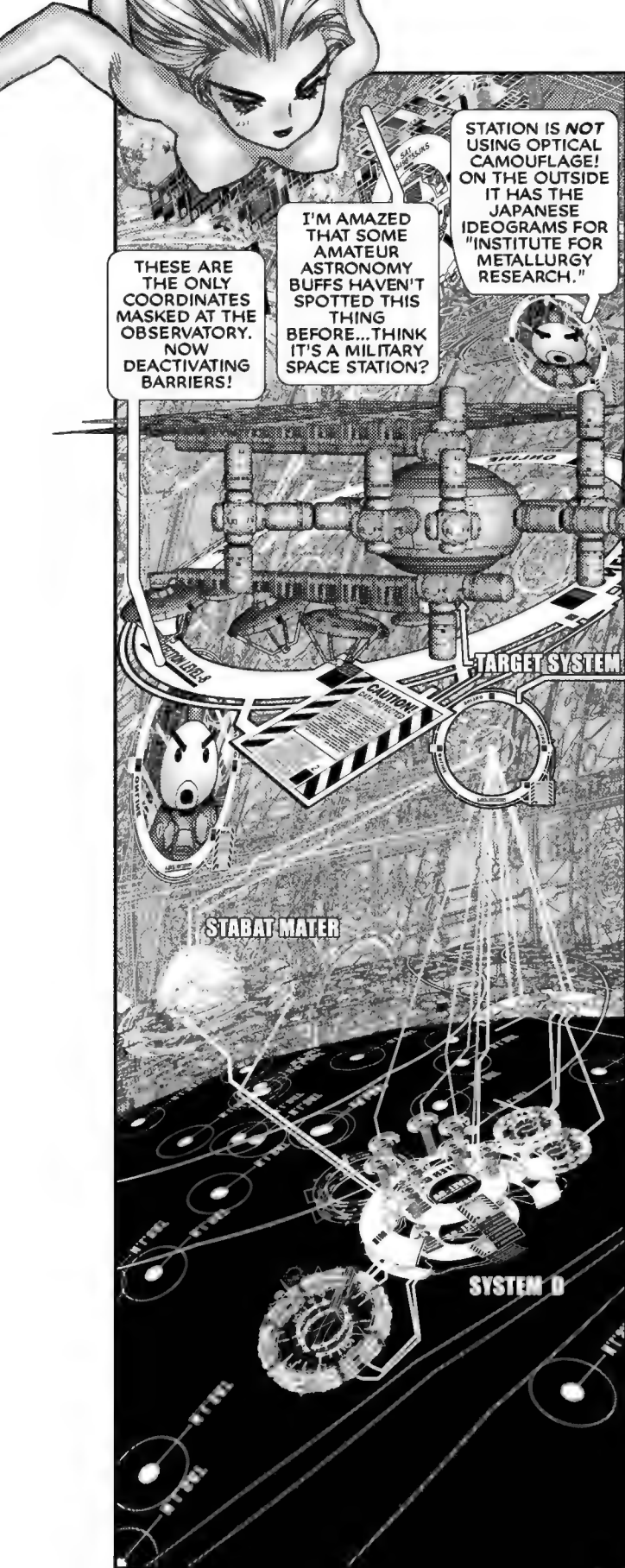
ALL OUR MINES ARE NEUTRALIZED!

DEPLOY MASTER SET OF TOY-BOMBS ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE TRUCK-DRIVER'S BRAIN!

DEPLOY MASTER SET OF IMMUNE-DEFICIENCY VIRUSES ON THE ROUTE THAT GOES THROUGH UNIT 28. PHYSICALLY SEAL OFF LASER TERMINALS!

TOY-BOMB: Incorporates parts of compound viruses into small file elements, such as thumbnails or icons. Often included in videogame image files, therefore called "Toy-bomb." Can't be used to deliver complex AI, but has considerable generic function.





THESE ARE THE ONLY COORDINATES MASKED AT THE OBSERVATORY. NOW DEACTIVATING BARRIERS!

I'M AMAZED THAT SOME AMATEUR ASTRONOMY BUFFS HAVEN'T SPOTTED THIS THING BEFORE...THINK IT'S A MILITARY SPACE STATION?

STATION IS NOT USING OPTICAL CAMOUFLAGE! ON THE OUTSIDE IT HAS THE JAPANESE IDEOGRAMS FOR "INSTITUTE FOR METALLURGY RESEARCH."

I'VE GOT COORDINATES ON A SILHOUETTE THAT LOOKS LIKE AN ANTENNA...

SET UP A NEW ROUTE FROM TERMINALS IN HEADQUARTERS' AIR-CONTROL SECTION.

ANALYZE THE STATION'S MATERIALS AND ANCHOR ENEMY FACILITY COORDINATES TO ALL NEARBY SPY SATELLITES!

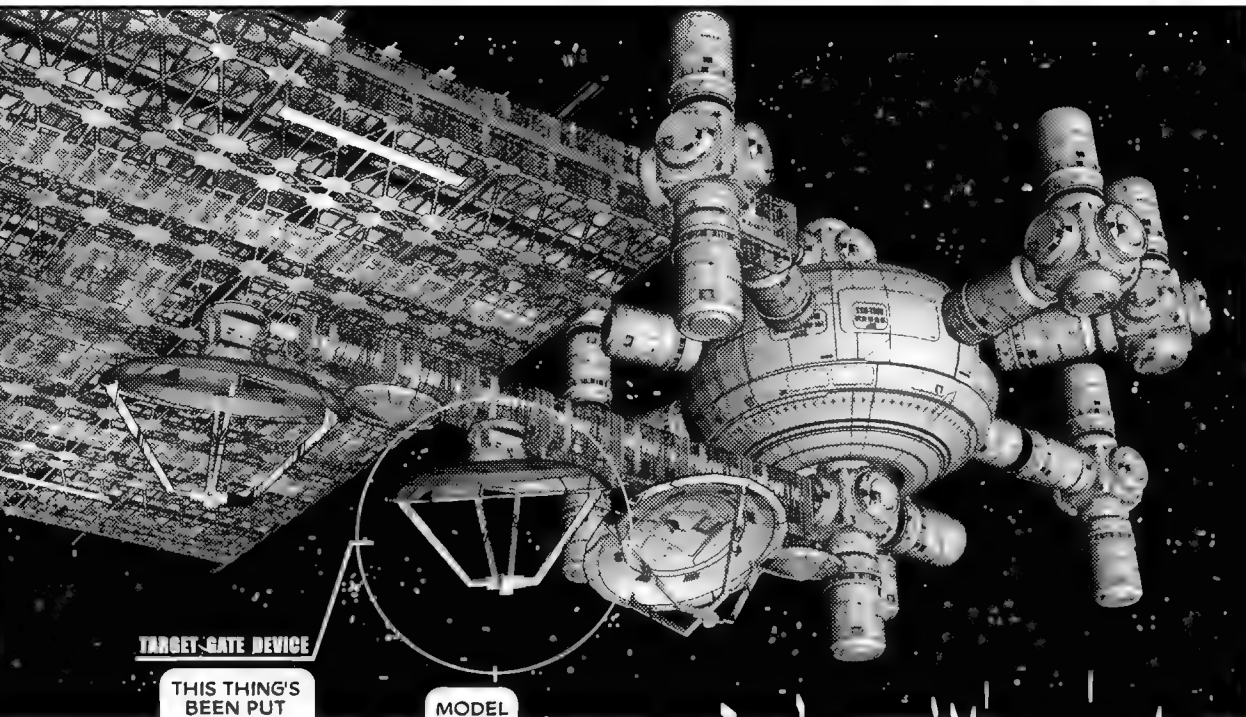
ENEMY SCAN HAS PENETRATED LEVEL THREE OF DECATONCALE.

THE OBSERVATORY'S MAIN POWER JUST WENT OFF! LOOKS LIKE A POWER OUTAGE IN THE WHOLE REGION... EMERGENCY BACKUP GENERATORS GOING INTO OPERATION!

DEPLOY MASTER SET OF MINES IN THE REGION'S AIRCRAFT CONTROL AND MILITARY FACILITIES... WITHDRAW FROM OBSERVATORY!

NOW ACCESSING ENEMY FACILITIES...

DEPLOY MAIN FORCES AROUND GATES!



TARGET-GATE DEVICE

THIS THING'S BEEN PUT TOGETHER FROM UNITS MADE BY POSEIDON INDUSTRIAL.

MODEL YEAR 2031...



E SET VIRUS ARRAY WILL REACT IN EIGHT SECONDS!

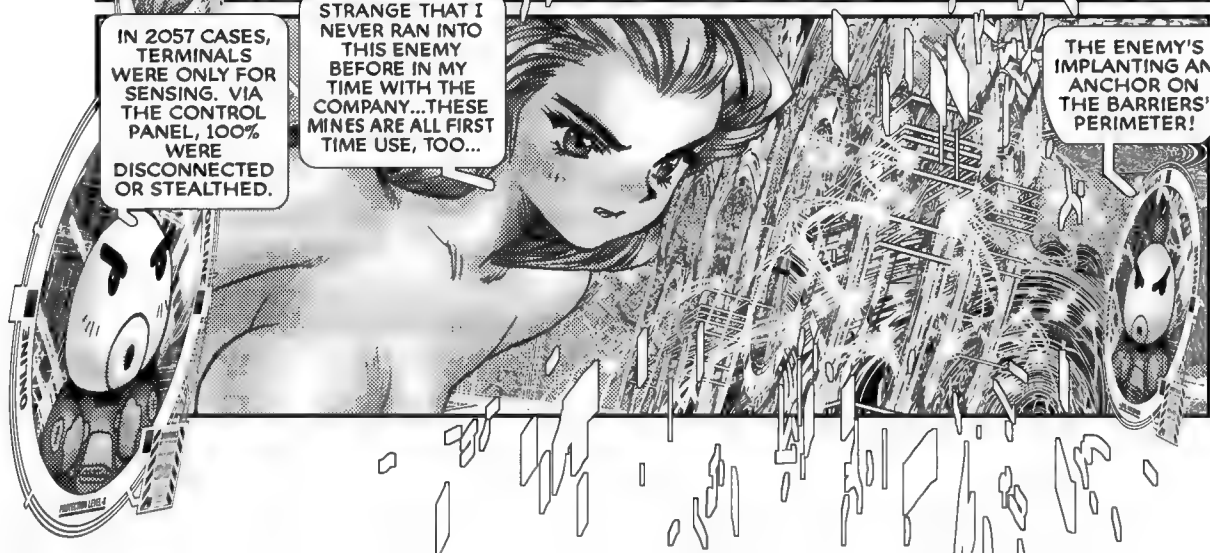
DISCONNECTS AND MAZES... THIS IS REALLY AN IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS!

AUTO-UPDATE MAZE 02 HAS BEEN PENETRATED!

STRANGE THAT I NEVER RAN INTO THIS ENEMY BEFORE IN MY TIME WITH THE COMPANY...THESE MINES ARE ALL FIRST TIME USE, TOO...

IN 2057 CASES, TERMINALS WERE ONLY FOR SENSING. VIA THE CONTROL PANEL, 100% WERE DISCONNECTED OR STEALTHED.

THE ENEMY'S IMPLANTING AN ANCHOR ON THE BARRIERS' PERIMETER!





MISTRESS! BRAIN ACTIVITY HAS REACHED A DANGEROUS LEVEL! WANT TO INJECT SOME SUPPRESSANTS...?

NON.

MMM...YOU CAN REALLY SEE THE MYSTERY OF ORGANIC OBJECTS FROM HERE...

WE HAVE A UNIDIRECTIONAL DISCONNECT ON THE MAIN POWER CONTROL PANEL. THIS ROUTE IS NOT INFILTRATABLE...

MISTRESS, OUR CPU IS ONLY 2% AWAY FROM MAXIMUM THRESHOLD... WE'RE BURNING UP...!

WE'RE GETTING INDICATIONS THAT FIREPOWER CONTROL MINES HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED IN A STRATEGIC NUCLEAR SUB BELONGING TO THE U.S. PACIFIC FLEET!

IT'S NOW CHANGING COURSE AND MOVING TO ATTACK DEPTH!

INITIATE INTERCEPT SCENARIO! GO IN THROUGH THE NAVIGATION SYSTEM... AND WATCH OUT FOR MINES!

THE OLD PRIMARY REFLECTOR PANEL WAS RECENTLY REMOVED FROM THE HUBBLE 3 TELESCOPE. DELTA-VEE IT INTO LINE OF SIGHT WITH THE ENEMY FACILITY AND PREPARE TO USE IT TO FRY THE POWER-GENERATOR PANELS.

COMMUNICATIONS BUDDY SIGNAL CONFIRMED VIA SPY SATELLITE!

IT'LL TAKE A LITTLE WHILE TO DO THAT. ONLY ONE OF THE SHUTTLE CREW HAS AN E-BRAIN...

D SET VIRUS ARRAY WILL BE NEUTRALIZED IN FOUR SECONDS!

L52 BARRIER HAS DISINTEGRATED! ENEMY HAS INFILTRATED DECATONCALE!

ACTIVATING ALL ATTACK BARRIERS!

NO RESPONSE IN 60%!

125 DECOYS HEAVILY DAMAGED! LINKS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED...

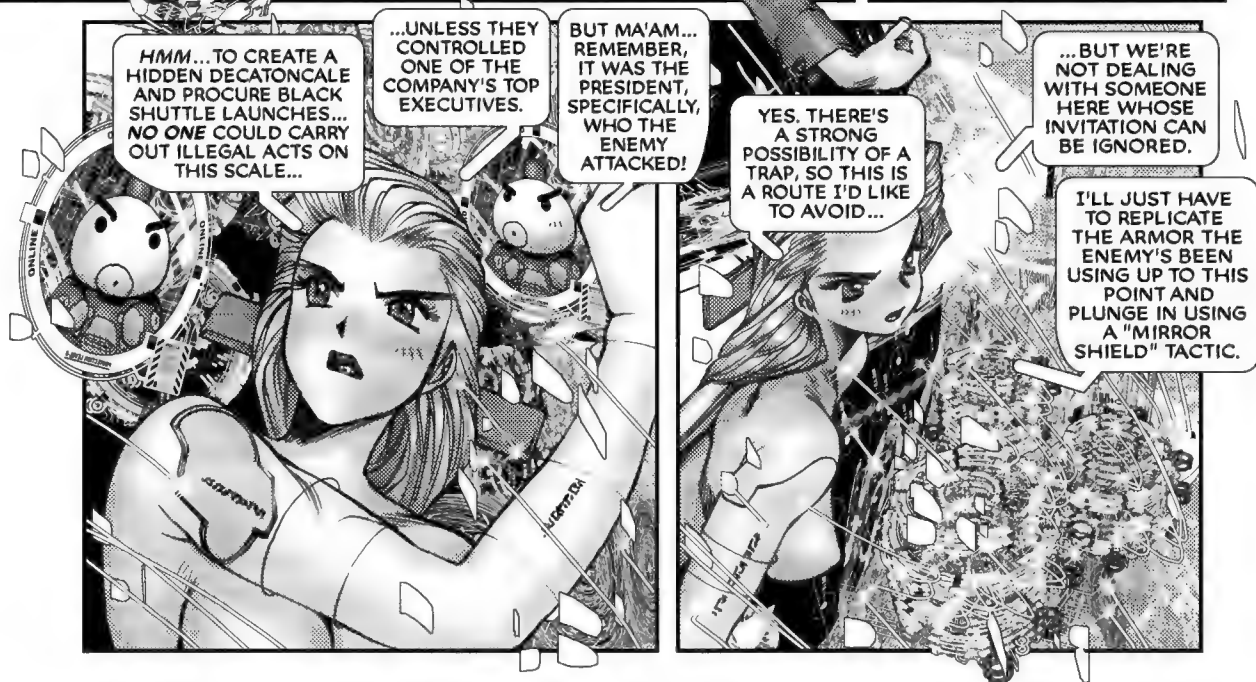
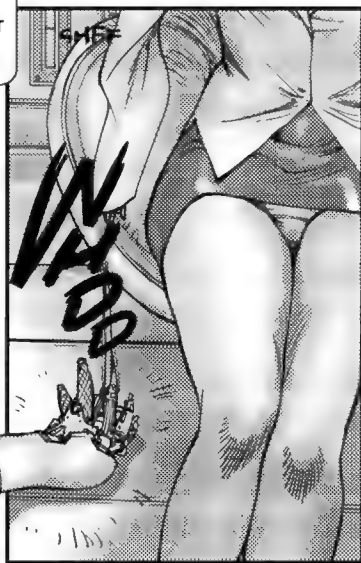
UPDATE WORK ON PRIORITY CODE FOR SECTOR L IS CURRENTLY BEING ROTATED OUT...



ENEMY ATTACK-BARRIERS HAVE FUSED WITH ANTIBODIES AND PIERCED OUR BARRIERS! SECOND ARMED CONTROL SYSTEM IS CONTAMINATED!

SHK
CHAK
KLIK
SHIK
CHAK

DISCONNECT TERMINALS! VALKYRIE! START RESTORATION WORK!



HMM... TO CREATE A HIDDEN DECATONCALE AND PROCURE BLACK SHUTTLE LAUNCHES... NO ONE COULD CARRY OUT ILLEGAL ACTS ON THIS SCALE...

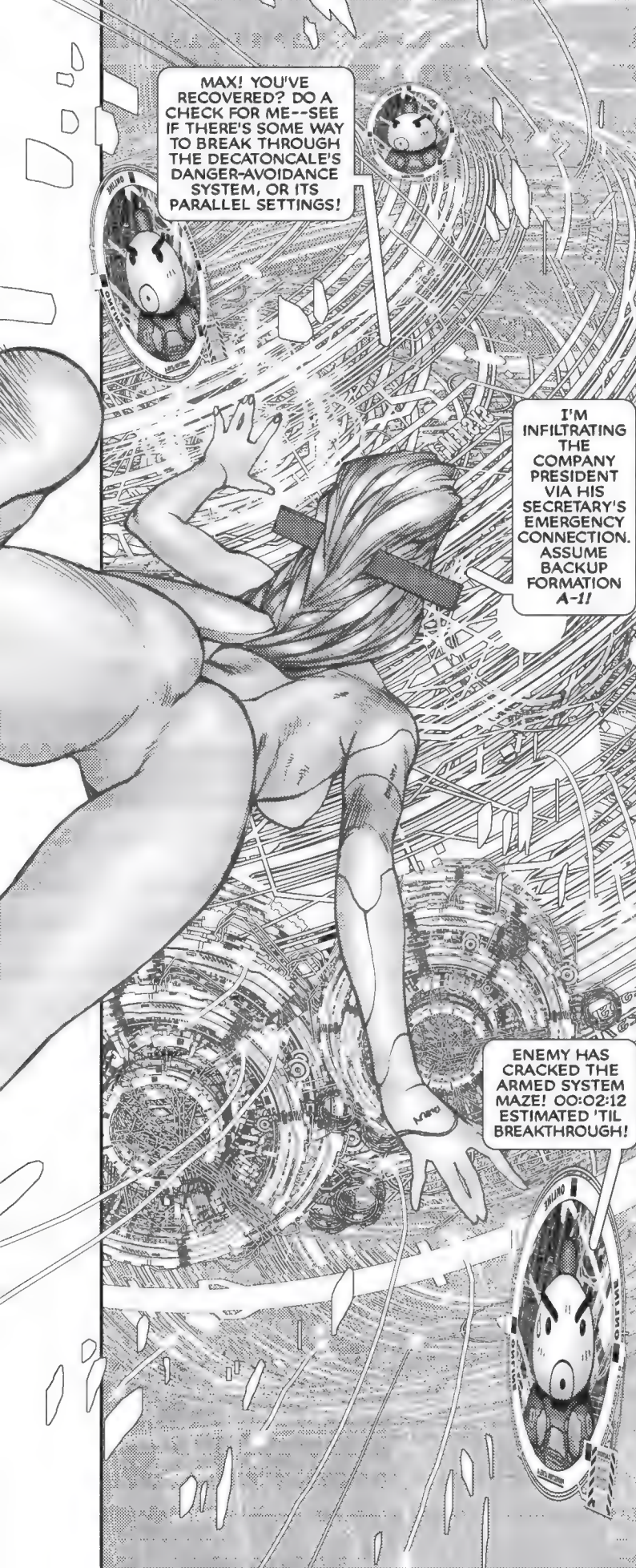
...UNLESS THEY CONTROLLED ONE OF THE COMPANY'S TOP EXECUTIVES.

BUT MA'AM... REMEMBER, IT WAS THE PRESIDENT, SPECIFICALLY, WHO THE ENEMY ATTACKED!

YES, THERE'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY OF A TRAP, SO THIS IS A ROUTE I'D LIKE TO AVOID...

...BUT WE'RE NOT DEALING WITH SOMEONE HERE WHOSE INVITATION CAN BE IGNORED.

I'LL JUST HAVE TO REPLICATE THE ARMOR THE ENEMY'S BEEN USING UP TO THIS POINT AND PLUNGE IN USING A "MIRROR SHIELD" TACTIC.



MAX! YOU'VE
RECOVERED? DO A
CHECK FOR ME--SEE
IF THERE'S SOME WAY
TO BREAK THROUGH
THE DECATONCALE'S
DANGER-AVOIDANCE
SYSTEM, OR ITS
PARALLEL SETTINGS!

I'M
INFILTRATING
THE
COMPANY
PRESIDENT
VIA HIS
SECRETARY'S
EMERGENCY
CONNECTION.
ASSUME
BACKUP
FORMATION
A-1!

ENEMY HAS
CRACKED THE
ARMED SYSTEM
MAZE! 00:02:12
ESTIMATED 'TIL
BREAKTHROUGH!

BARRIERS
NOW
PENETRATED!
PRESIDENT'S
BRAIN
INFILTRATED
UP TO LEVEL
4...

BODY-
CONTROL
SOFTWARE
GIMNI 34 IS
NOW
SUPPRESSED...
DEPLOYING
PERIPHERAL
BARRIERS!

PRESIDENT IS
IN DIVE
MODE...WANT
TO GO TO
LEVEL 5?

NO...FIRST
LINK WITH
THE
PHYSICAL
BODY...

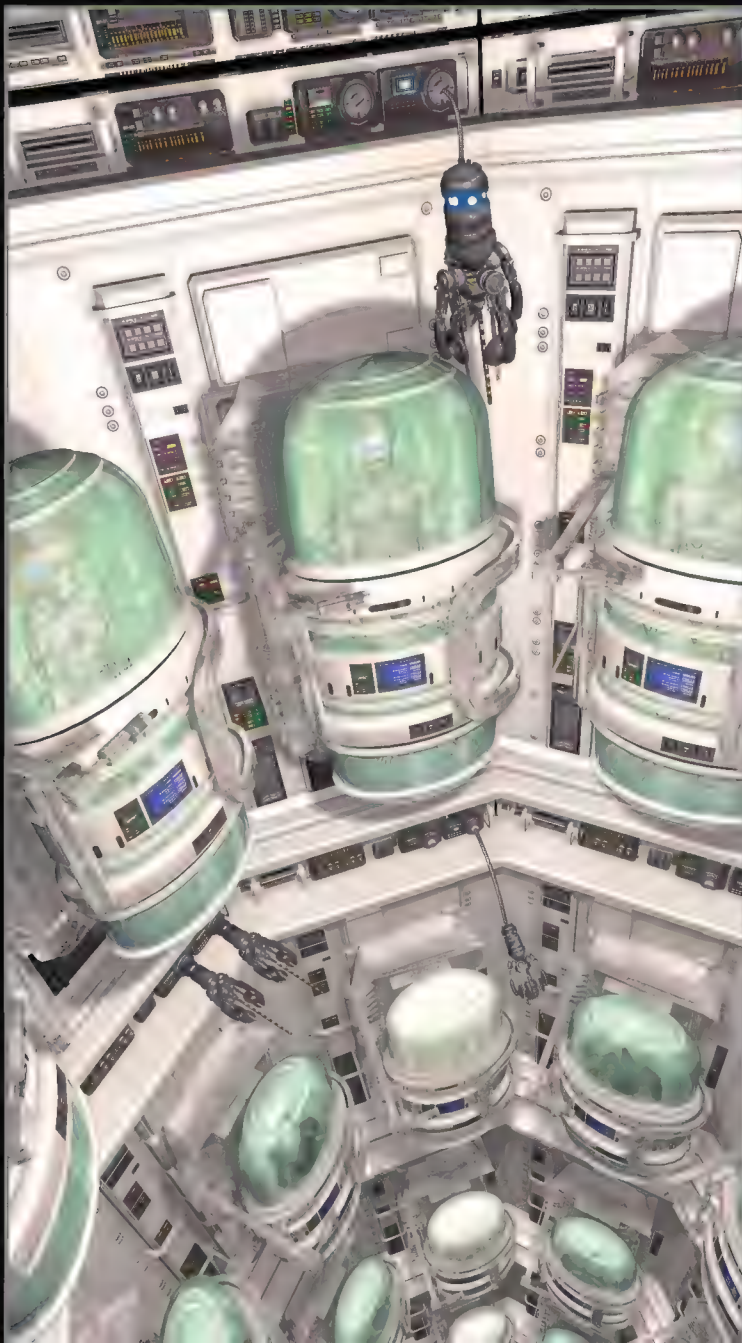


NOW CORRECTING
SENSORY
DEVICES... THEY'RE
IN TYPE "H" GEL.
IDENTIFYING WITH
OLFACTORY AND
TASTE SENSES!



MAX...? GIVE
PRIORITY TO
IMAGE
ANALYSIS.

AYE-
AYE,
SAH!



DANTE! GIVE ME A PRIORITY REPORT ON ALL DEVICES AND PERSONNEL IN VISIBLE RANGE. LEX! SCAN THE PERIPHERY OF THE PRESIDENT'S BRAIN...SEARCH FOR RELATED ITEMS!

BARRIER 256 HAS BEEN CLEARED... NOW EXPANDING ROUTE ARRAYS! UPDATING ANTI-BODIES!

INTERCEPT PATTERN DOES NOT MATCH THAT OF ENEMY DURING EARLIER ENGAGEMENTS.

SEEMS LIKE A FAIRLY LARGE-SCALE GROUP-BODY DEPOSIT FACILITY. DESIGN ENGINEERING ASSUMES MICROGRAVITY...

NOW ANALYZING ROUTES! REGARDING THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICAL LOCATION...THERE'S A 90% POSSIBILITY THAT HE'S AT THE SAME COORDINATES AS THE ENEMY DECATONCALE.

AND THE OTHER 10%...?

THERE IS ONE FACILITY NOW ORBITING THE MOON FOR WHICH THERE IS A CLEAR OPTICAL COM PATH, BUT IT'LL BE ENTERING LOS IN LESS THAN SIXTY SECONDS.

SO...THE PRESIDENT'S PHYSICAL FORM IS IN AN ENEMY FACILITY. HMM...WONDER IF THE ENEMY SWITCHED PLACES WITH HIM SOMEWHERE?

OKAY...I'M GOING TO INFILTRATE THE ENEMY DECATONCALE THROUGH THE PRESIDENT'S BRAIN! I'LL APPROACH LEVEL 5 CAUTIOUSLY...

TRACK IT UNTIL LOSS OF SIGNAL.



?



THIS IS AN ORBITING BODY-DEPOSIT FACILITY CALLED **SLEEPING UNIVERSE**, WITH 202 RESIDENTS. IT'S SORT OF A "SECRET CLUB."

I'VE DISCOVERED A LIST OF FACILITY VIPS IN THE "CONNECTIONS" FILE...

THE FACILITY ITSELF HAS MEDIUM-LARGE VIRTUAL SENSORY SPACE.

DETAILS...?

THEY'RE CHARTER MEMBERS, WITH FOUR TIMES THE NUMBER OF CONNECTING DEVICES AS OTHERS, THREE TIMES THE AMOUNT OF BACKUP POWER, AND CLOSEST PROXIMITY TO THE TWO ESCAPE PODS.

THERE ARE ALSO TWELVE MAINTENANCE CEBOTS ON SITE.

LOOKS SORT OF LIKE THE STABAT MATER AND MILLENNIUM SET-UP, DOESN'T IT...?

LOOKS KINDA LIKE US, TOO... THIS ONE'S REGISTERED UNDER "MOTOKO KUSANAGI."

MY COLLEAGUE, EH? I THOUGHT WE MIGHT RUN INTO THIS SORT OF SITUATION, BUT NOT QUITE SO SOON...

TIME FOR THAT OLD "MIGHT-BE-A-TRAP-BUT-LET'S-DIVE-IN-ANYWAY" ROUTINE AGAIN?

YOU GOT IT.

USE THE "MOTOKO KUSANAGI" ELEMENTS IN ME FOR AUTHENTICATION...WE'LL INFILTRATE THE "MOTOKO KUSANAGI" HERE.

SORT OF A "PARENT-CHILD" SHOWDOWN, HUH...?


SO WHO'S THE PARENT...?

SET TIME DIFFERENTIALS ON ALL BARRIERS TO PREVENT FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS.

START BY CONFIRMING PROSTHESIS CONTROL OPERATIONS DURING HIBERNATION...

ESTIMATING ONE MINUTE 'TIL THE ENEMY BREAKS THROUGH THE MISTRESS'S ARMED SYSTEM MAZE.





WE'VE GOT
A CONTROL
ABNORMALITY
IN HER
PROSTHETIC
BODY! SHE
APPEARS TO
BE USING THE
SAME TYPE
OF TIME
DIFFERENTIAL
GATES!

AND THE
MIRROR-
SHIELD...?

IT'S
FROZEN.

ENEMY'S
EVOLVING
ANTIBODIES ARE
INFILTRATING
LEVEL 3!
BARRIERS ARE
HAVING ZERO
EFFECT!

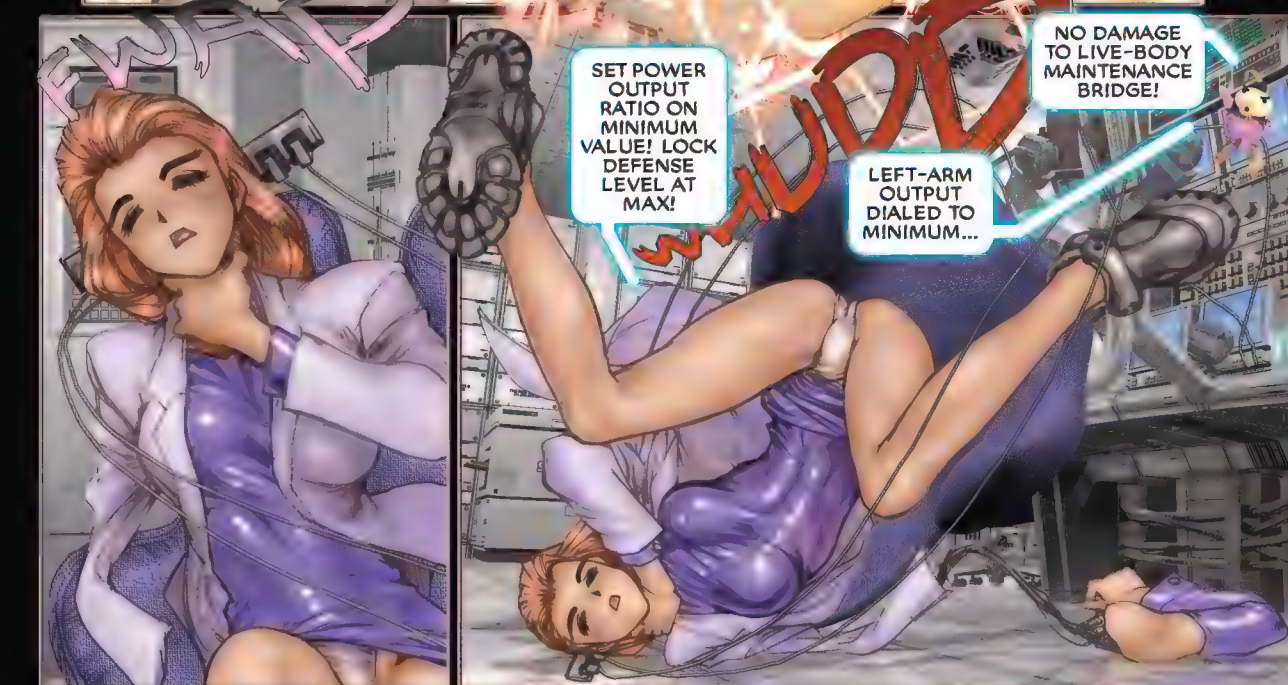
"E" SET
OF VIRUS
ARRAYS HAS
PENETRATED
ENEMY'S
LEVEL 3
BARRIERS!



LEFT-ARM
CONTROL
SECTOR
HAS BEEN
BREACHED!

AMPUTATE
LEFT ARM!

NOT
ENOUGH
TIME!!



SET POWER
OUTPUT
RATIO ON
MINIMUM
VALUE! LOCK
DEFENSE
LEVEL AT
MAX!

NO DAMAGE
TO LIVE-BODY
MAINTENANCE
BRIDGE!

LEFT-ARM
OUTPUT
DIALED TO
MINIMUM...

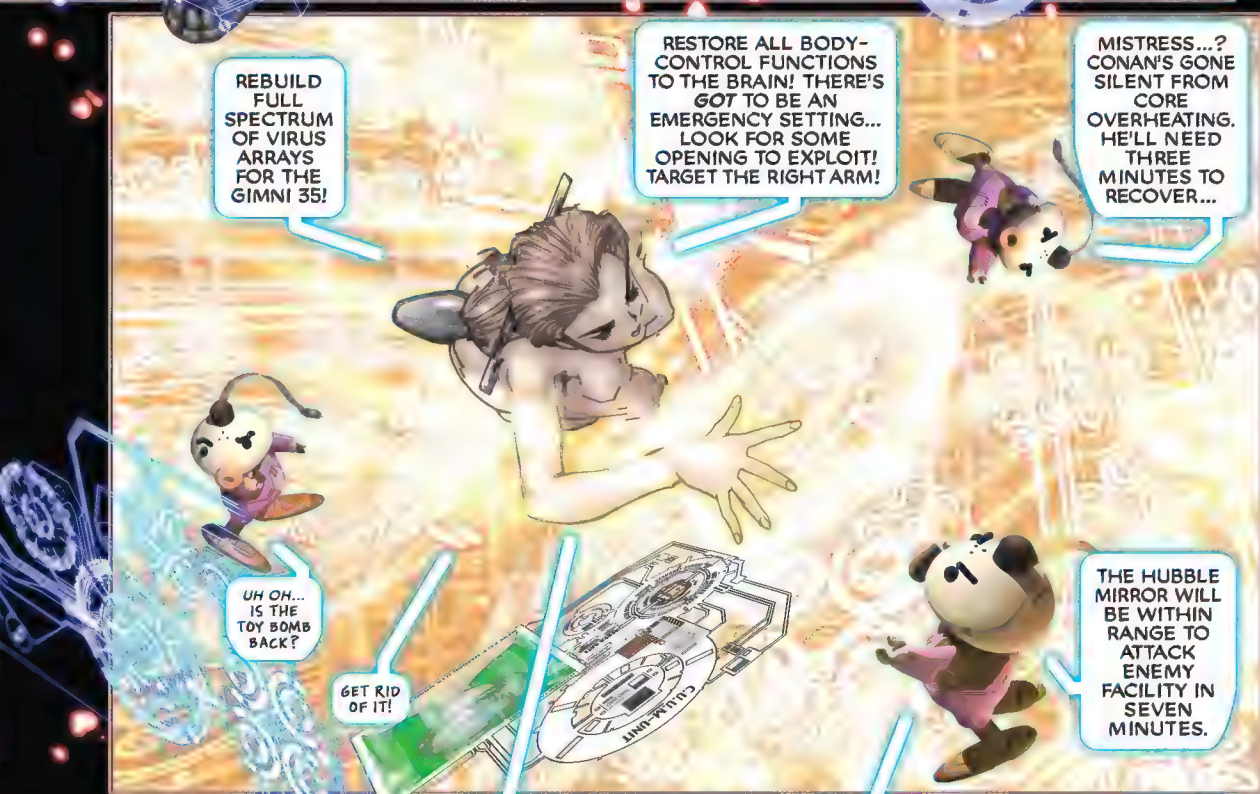


WE'VE TAKEN OVER 60% OF THE ENEMY MOTOKO KUSANAGI'S BODY CONTROLS, BUT THE BRIDGE TO HER PHYSICAL BODY SEEMS BLOCKED...

YOU THINK THE VIRTUAL BODY IN E-BRAIN SPACE IS HER PRIMARY BODY?

COULD CONTROL OF THE PHYSICAL BODY BE LEFT UP TO DECATONCALE?

IT DOES APPEAR THAT WAY...



REBUILD FULL SPECTRUM OF VIRUS ARRAYS FOR THE GIMNI 35!

RESTORE ALL BODY-CONTROL FUNCTIONS TO THE BRAIN! THERE'S GOT TO BE AN EMERGENCY SETTING... LOOK FOR SOME OPENING TO EXPLOIT! TARGET THE RIGHT ARM!

MISTRESS...? CONAN'S GONE SILENT FROM CORE OVERHEATING. HE'LL NEED THREE MINUTES TO RECOVER...

UH OH... IS THE TOY BOMB BACK?

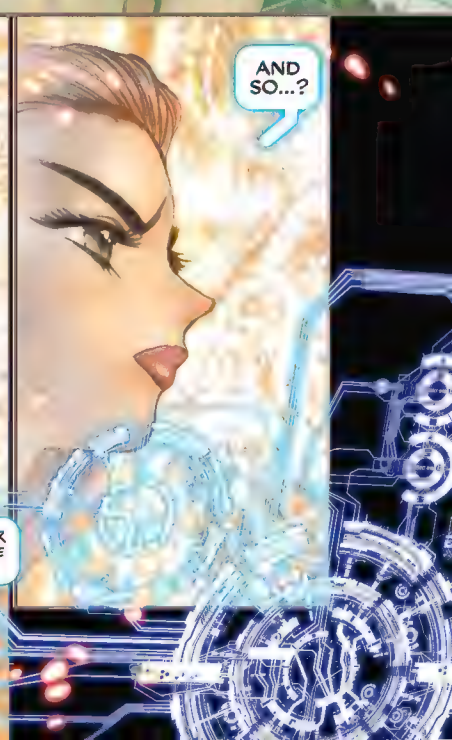
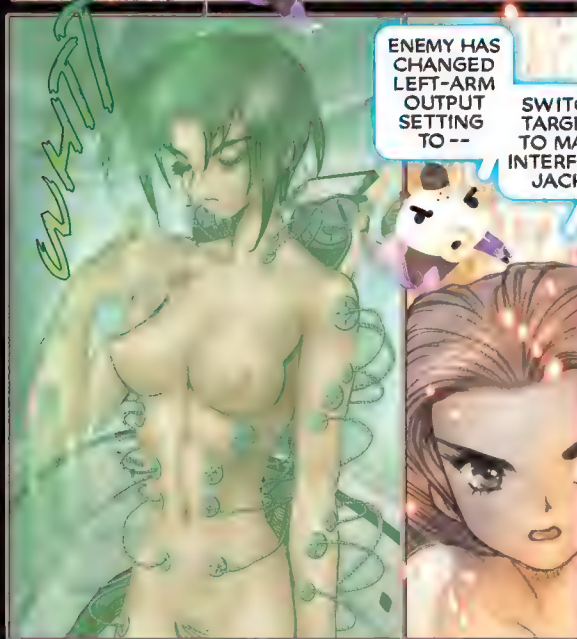
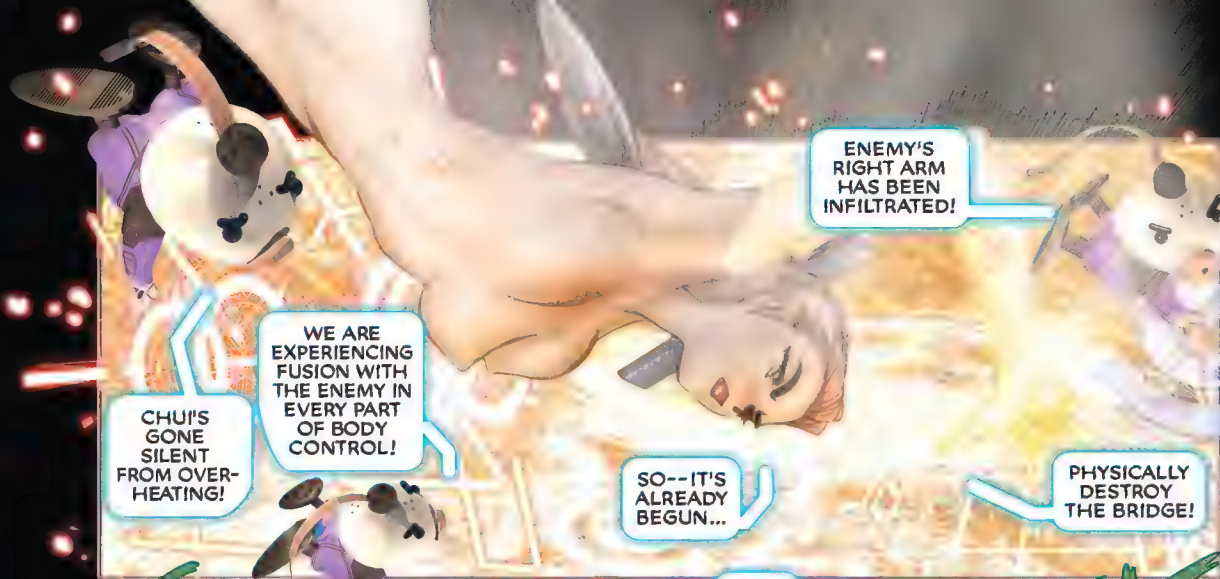
GET RID OF IT!

THE HUBBLE MIRROR WILL BE WITHIN RANGE TO ATTACK ENEMY FACILITY IN SEVEN MINUTES.



INJECT VIRUS ARRAYS INTO ENEMY MAINTENANCE CEBOTS AND STAND BY!

MISTRESS! ENEMY HAS STARTED INFILTRATING THE LEFT LEG MAZE! 00:01:12 ESTIMATED UNTIL BREAKTHROUGH OCCURS!



ENEMY
RESPONSE
HAS
DROPPED
72%!

VIRUSES
APPEAR
TO BE
TAKING
EFFECT!

ENEMY MAZE-
DIFFUSION RATE
EFFECTIVENESS
HAS CLIMBED
TO 86%!

I'M GOING TO
USE MY MOTOKO
KUSANAGI
ATTRIBUTES AND
GO UP TO LEVEL 6
PRIORITY SETTINGS
BEFORE FUSING!

I'M OVER-
HEATING...

LEVEL 6
GHOSTLINE
MAIN BARRIERS
ARE ALREADY
FUSING... FUSION
PROCESS IS NOW
42% COMPLETE!

MA'AM...AT
THIS RATE,
IT'LL SOON BE
DIFFICULT TO
MAINTAIN
INTEGRITY OF
PERSONAL
IDENTITY...

SHARED MOTOKO
ELEMENTS NOW
FROZEN! MOVING
FROM TESTING
FUSED PORTIONS
TO CONTACTING
ENEMY!

WHAT
ABOUT THE
FUSION
PROCESS?

ROUTE
ARRAYS ARE
LOSING SYNC!
THIRTY-FOUR
SATELLITES
ARE NOW
SUPPRESSED...

NOW CONTROLLING
VIRAL
RESPONSE
ON FOUR
ARMORED
SUITS!

STILL
ONGOING...
NOW AT
22%!

LOKI AND
SHIVA
HAVE GONE
SILENT
FROM CPU
OVER-
HEATING!

I'M GOING
TO BREAK
THIS OFF IF
THE LEVEL 6
MAIN
BARRIER
FUSION RATE
EXCEEDS
88%!

KEEP
YOUR EYE
ON THOSE
ARMORED
SUIT
VIRUSES!

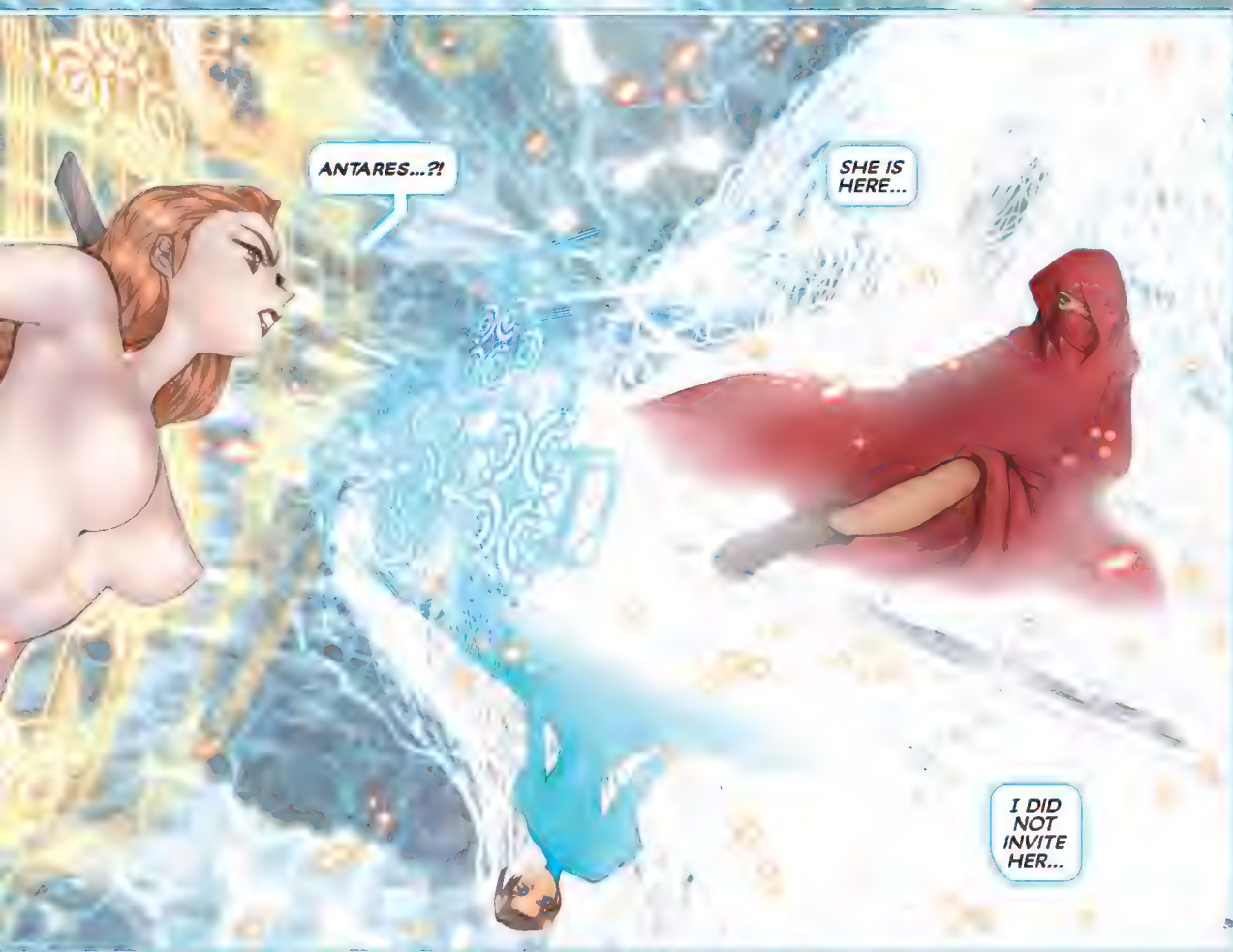


!!

WELL,
WELL,
WELL!

LEVEL 06-GHOSTLINE
CAUTION!

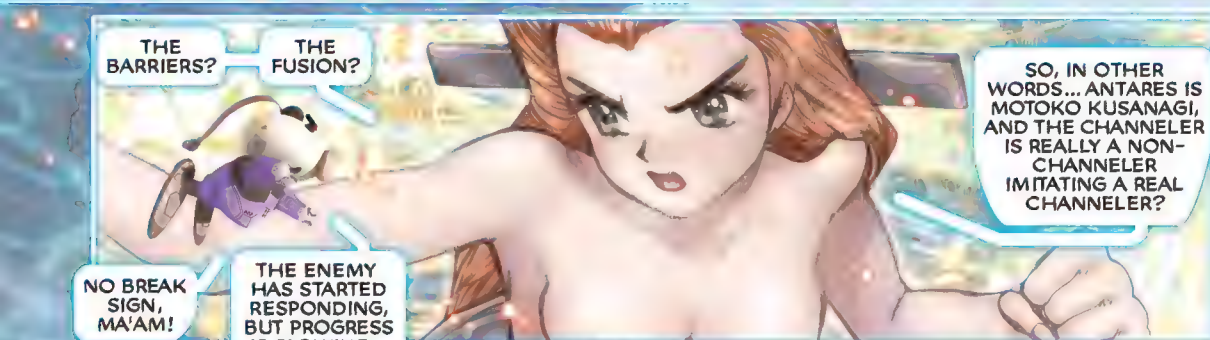
Actually, when you go through an e-brain's deep-level ghostline, people wouldn't be this visually identifiable (especially with their clothes on...but maybe "real" ghosts could wear clothes if they were cremated or buried with them on?). I just tried to show that Motoko senses things this way. And of course I was worried that maybe i was drawing just a *little* too much exposed flesh here....



ANTARES...?!

SHE IS
HERE...

I DID
NOT
INVITE
HER...



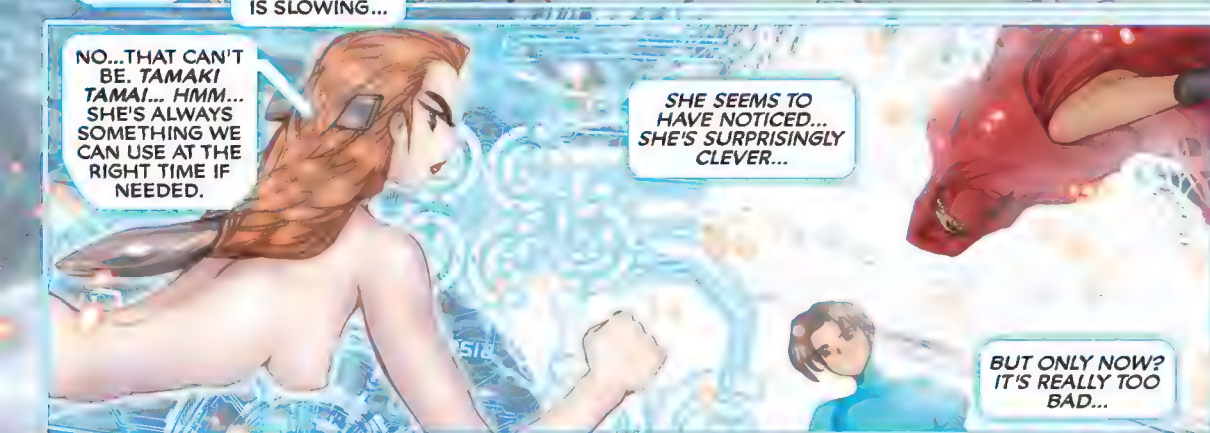
THE
BARRIERS?

THE
FUSION?

NO BREAK
SIGN,
MA'AM!

THE ENEMY
HAS STARTED
RESPONDING,
BUT PROGRESS
IS SLOWING...

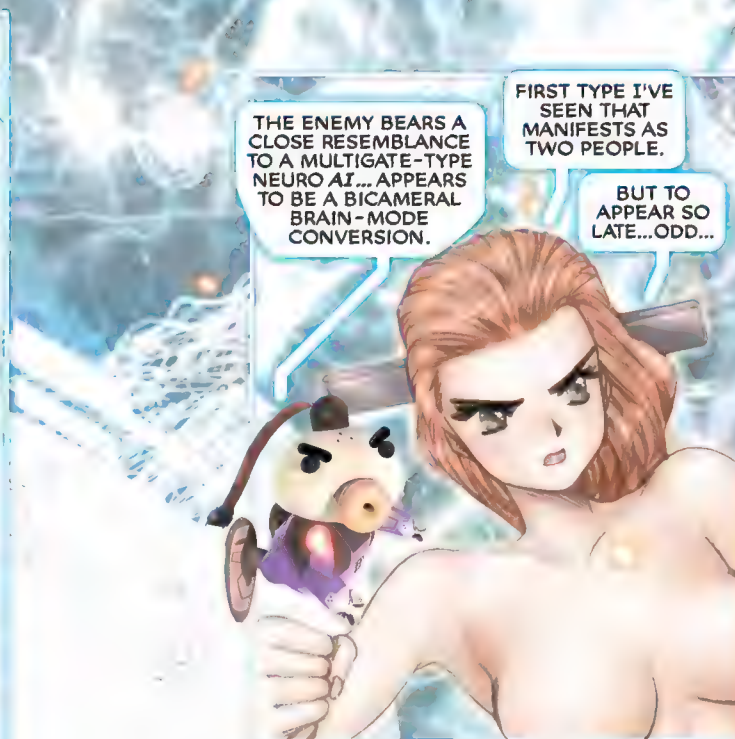
SO, IN OTHER
WORDS... ANTARES IS
MOTOKO KUSANAGI,
AND THE CHANNELER
IS REALLY A NON-
CHANNELER
IMITATING A REAL
CHANNELER?



NO...THAT CAN'T
BE. TAMAKI
TAMAI... Hmm...
SHE'S ALWAYS
SOMETHING WE
CAN USE AT THE
RIGHT TIME IF
NEEDED.

SHE SEEMS TO
HAVE NOTICED...
SHE'S SURPRISINGLY
CLEVER...

BUT ONLY NOW?
IT'S REALLY TOO
BAD...



THE ENEMY BEARS A
CLOSE RESEMBLANCE
TO A MULTIGATE-TYPE
NEURO AI... APPEARS
TO BE A BICAMERAL
BRAIN-MODE
CONVERSION.

FIRST TYPE I'VE
SEEN THAT
MANIFESTS AS
TWO PEOPLE.

BUT TO
APPEAR SO
LATE... ODD...



I AM
ANTARES.

SHE IS
SPICA.



WE CALL YOU
"MOTOKO II."



IN OTHER
WORDS,
SORT OF AN
ELEVENTH-
LEVEL
ISOTOPE...

...THE TYPE
THAT IGNORES
WHATEVER
CANNOT BE
SCIENTIFICALLY
VERIFIED, MM?



MOVE TAMAKI
TO THE JAPAN
CHANNELING
AGENCY'S ANTI-
THUG SAFE
FACILITY!

ACCORDING TO
THE RECORDS, AT
LEAST, SHE'S
ALREADY THERE...

WELL,
INFILTRATE
AN EMPLOYEE
AND DOUBLE-
CHECK!

If I were to indicate them "Orion"-style, using Japanese characters, I'd write "Antares" as "Darkness-Hanging-Child" and "Spica" as "Original element-Light".



USE MOTOKO KUSANAGI ELEMENTS TO FIND AN OPENING IN THE CHANNELING AGENCY, AND TAKE OVER TAMAKI AT LEVEL 5!

YES'M!

WAIT A SEC... WHEN I WAS AT NEST 20, TAMAKI ASKED A QUESTION...

...ABOUT MY INVOLVEMENT WITH STABAT MATER...
!!

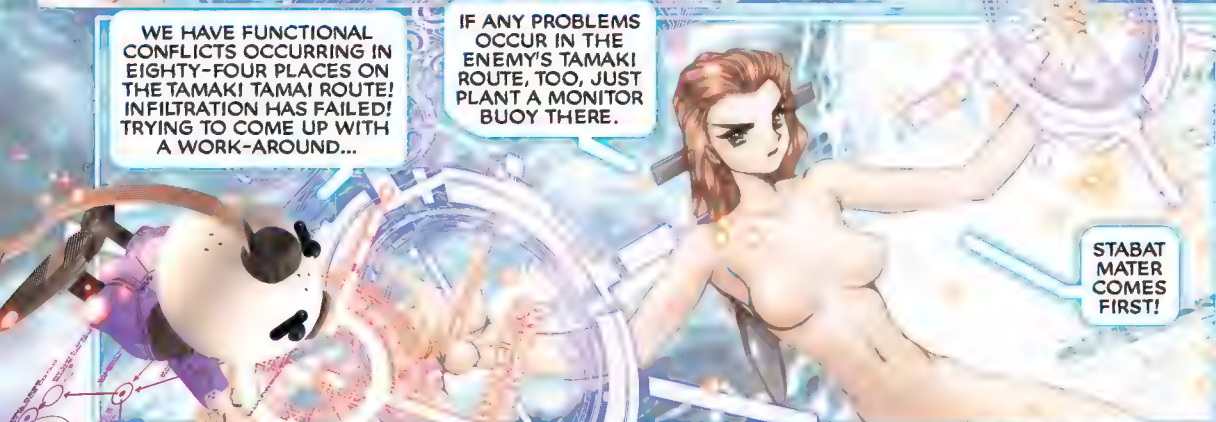
COLLECT DELTA-GRADE INFORMATION ON STABAT MATER!



NOW CREATING STABAT MATER-RELATED DELTA-GRADE NEUROMAP!

AH, HASTE CAN LEAD TO SO MANY PROBLEMS....!

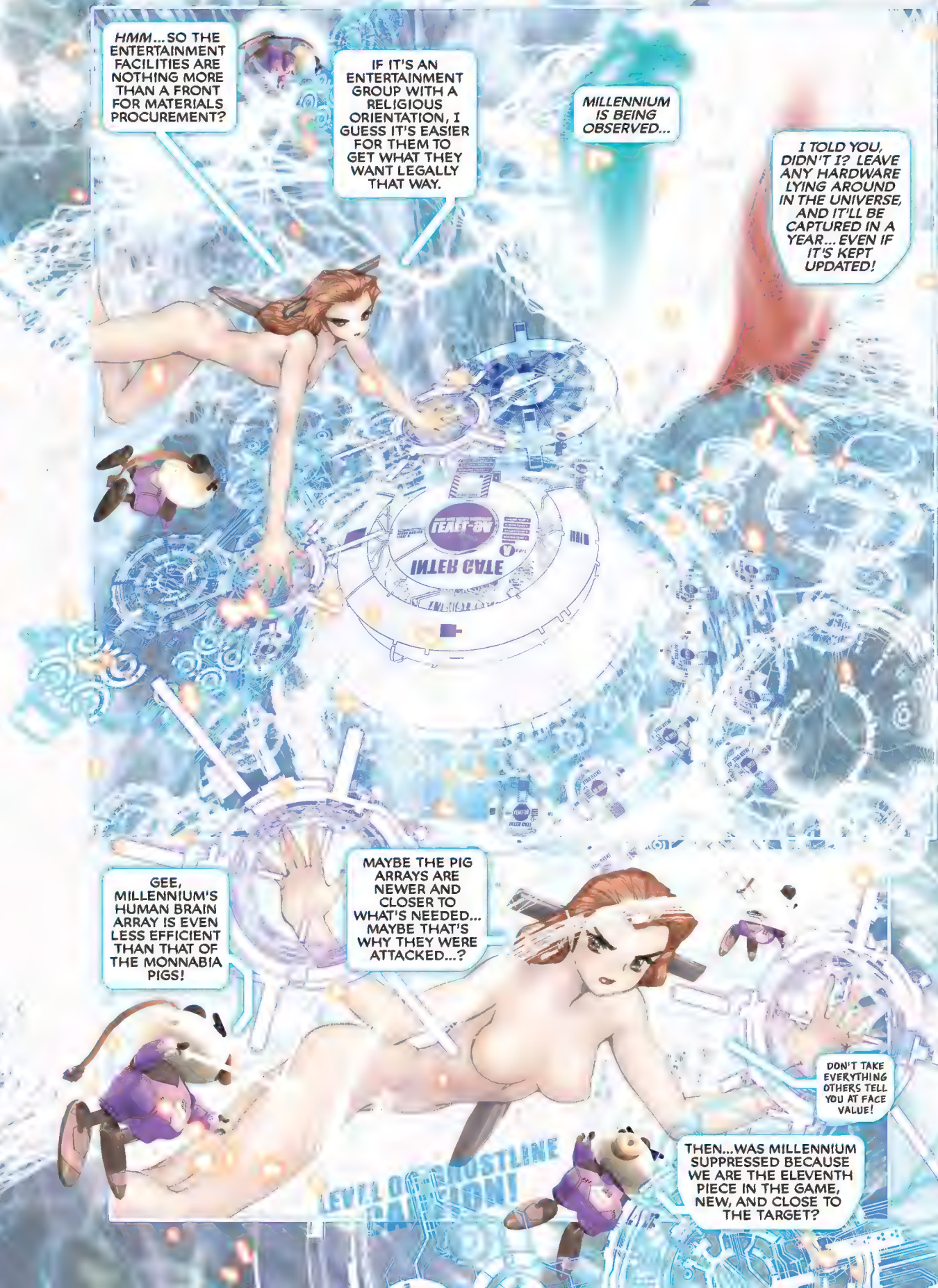
FOR HER, THINGS START TO BECOME INTERESTING FROM NOW ON...



WE HAVE FUNCTIONAL CONFLICTS OCCURRING IN EIGHTY-FOUR PLACES ON THE TAMAKI TAMAI ROUTE! INFILTRATION HAS FAILED! TRYING TO COME UP WITH A WORK-AROUND...

IF ANY PROBLEMS OCCUR IN THE ENEMY'S TAMAKI ROUTE, TOO, JUST PLANT A MONITOR BUOY THERE.

STABAT MATER COMES FIRST!



HMM... SO THE ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A FRONT FOR MATERIALS PROCUREMENT?

IF IT'S AN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP WITH A RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION, I GUESS IT'S EASIER FOR THEM TO GET WHAT THEY WANT LEGALLY THAT WAY.

MILLENNIUM IS BEING OBSERVED...

I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? LEAVE ANY HARDWARE LYING AROUND IN THE UNIVERSE, AND IT'LL BE CAPTURED IN A YEAR... EVEN IF IT'S KEPT UPDATED!

GEE, MILLENNIUM'S HUMAN BRAIN ARRAY IS EVEN LESS EFFICIENT THAN THAT OF THE MONNABIA PIGS!

MAYBE THE PIG ARRAYS ARE NEWER AND CLOSER TO WHAT'S NEEDED... MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY WERE ATTACKED...?

DON'T TAKE EVERYTHING OTHERS TELL YOU AT FACE VALUE!

THEN... WAS MILLENNIUM SUPPRESSED BECAUSE WE ARE THE ELEVENTH PIECE IN THE GAME, NEW, AND CLOSE TO THE TARGET?

GIVE ME THE
PIG-ARRAY
NEUROMAP!

YES'M!

HMM...THIS ISN'T
ONE OF THOSE
MILLENNIUM-STYLE
CENTRALIZED-
COMMAND TYPES.
SEARCH FOR THE
OVERALL CONTROL
SYSTEM!

EVERY UNIT HAS
EXACTLY THE
SAME PARALLEL
SETTINGS, MA'AM.

BUT SURELY
THESE CAN'T
BE RANDOM
LINKS...

...

WHEN I ASKED EARLIER
"WHY THE PIGS?"...YOU
SAID SOMETHING
ABOUT IT BEING MAYBE
"BECAUSE THEY'RE
FUN," RIGHT?

LESSEE...
RIGHT...THAT
WAS WHAT WE
SAID ON MARCH
6, 2035, AT
12:42:32~35.

THE
ARMED-
ARRAY LINK
HAS BEEN
RESTORED!

GOOD!

WHAT
DID YOU
MEAN BY
THAT?

INTELLIGENT AIs LIKE
US ARE AN UNUSUAL
EXISTENCE IN THE
KNOWN UNIVERSE,
EVEN ALLOWING FOR
ERRORS IN LANGUAGE,
AND OS TERMINALS.

THE ACTUAL NUMBER
OF HARDWARE
TERMINALS AND THE
DISTANCES BETWEEN
THEM ARE ONLY
VISUAL PHENOMENA.

HMM...
KEEP
GOING...

EVEN IF HUMAN
BRAINS ARE
LINKED, THEY
NORMALLY
CONTINUE TO BE
INDEPENDENT
ENTITIES AND
NEVER FUSE.

EVEN IF PARALLEL
PROCESSING IS DONE
ON A PROJECT, THERE
REALLY ISN'T MUCH
CHANGE IN ACTUAL
PROCESSING
EFFICIENCY--THERE'S
JUST A DIVERSITY
OF OUTPUT.

IS THAT ANY
DIFFERENT FROM
THE KIND OF
INDIVIDUALITY
YOU GUYS
HAVE?

VERY DIFFERENT.
HUMAN BRAIN
ARRAYS ARE
INDIVIDUALIZED
EVEN AT THE
DEEPEST PARTS
OF THEIR BASIC
STRUCTURES.
THEY'RE NOT
DESIGNED WITH
FUSION IN MIND.

OF COURSE, THEY'RE
TAILORED TO
INDIVIDUAL USERS'
PREFERENCES, BUT
"WE" ARE ACTUALLY
ONLY PART OF A
LARGER GIANT
SYSTEM CALLED "I."

SO WHAT'S
THE MAIN
ADVANTAGE
OF A SYSTEM
LIKE THAT?

I
DUNNO...

WANT TO USE AI TO
CREATE A DIVERSE-
FUNCTION SYSTEM
THAT WON'T FUSE?

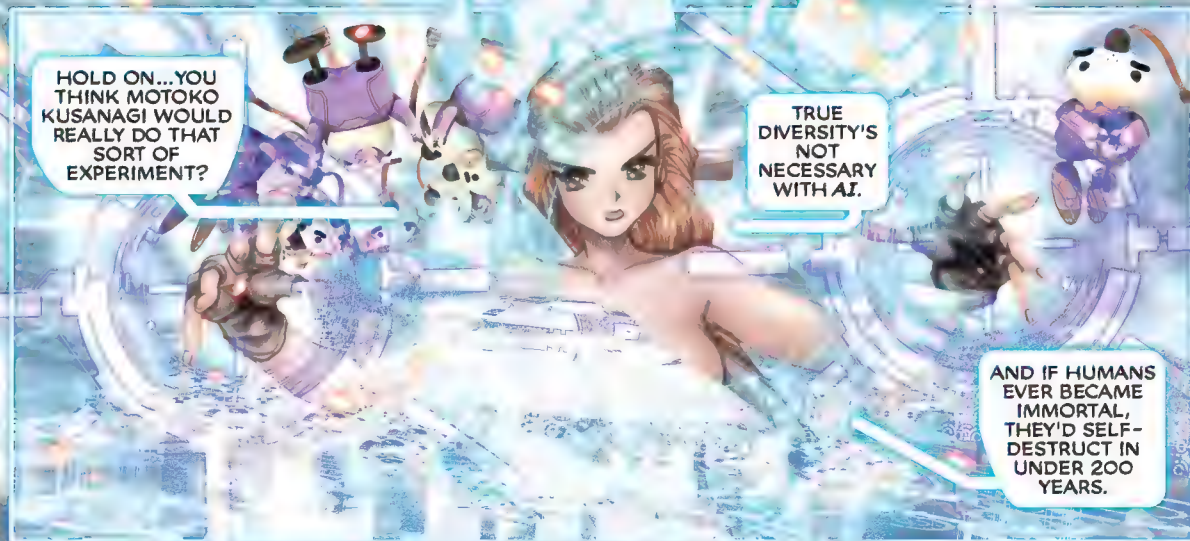
THEN HOW
ABOUT DOING
RESEARCH ON
COPYING THE
HUMAN BRAIN
INTO A NEURO
AI?

YOU MEAN DOING
RESEARCH INTO MACHINE
LIFE CAPABLE OF
REPLACING HUMANS...OR
RESEARCH INTO
IMMORTALITY, RIGHT?

LEVEL 06-GHOSTLINE
CAUTION!

IT'S ALL
THE SAME...

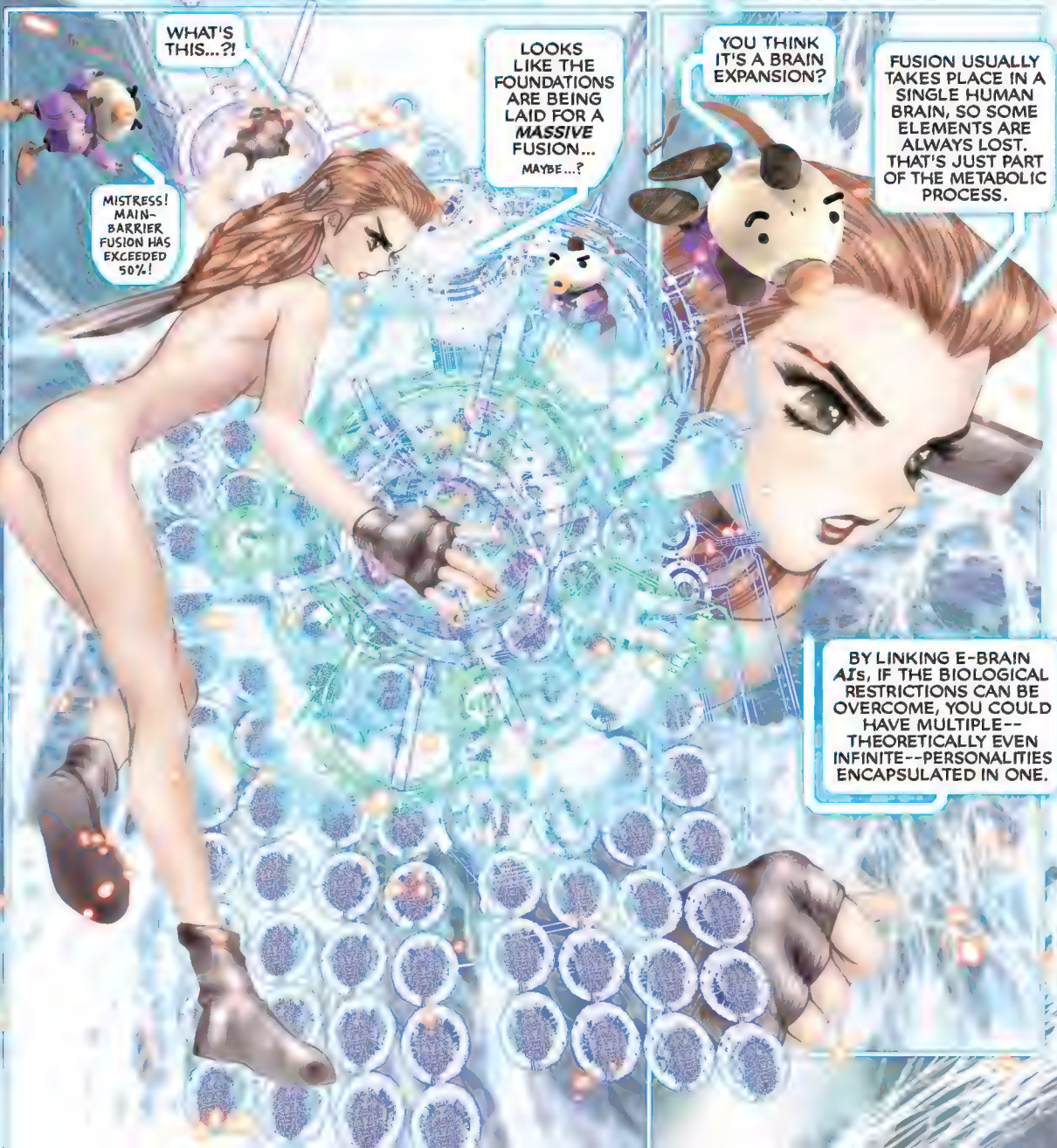
IF THE
LATTER, YOU
WOULDN'T
INTERFERE...
WOULD YOU?



HOLD ON...YOU THINK MOTOKO KUSANAGI WOULD REALLY DO THAT SORT OF EXPERIMENT?

TRUE DIVERSITY'S NOT NECESSARY WITH AI.

AND IF HUMANS EVER BECAME IMMORTAL, THEY'D SELF-DESTRUCT IN UNDER 200 YEARS.



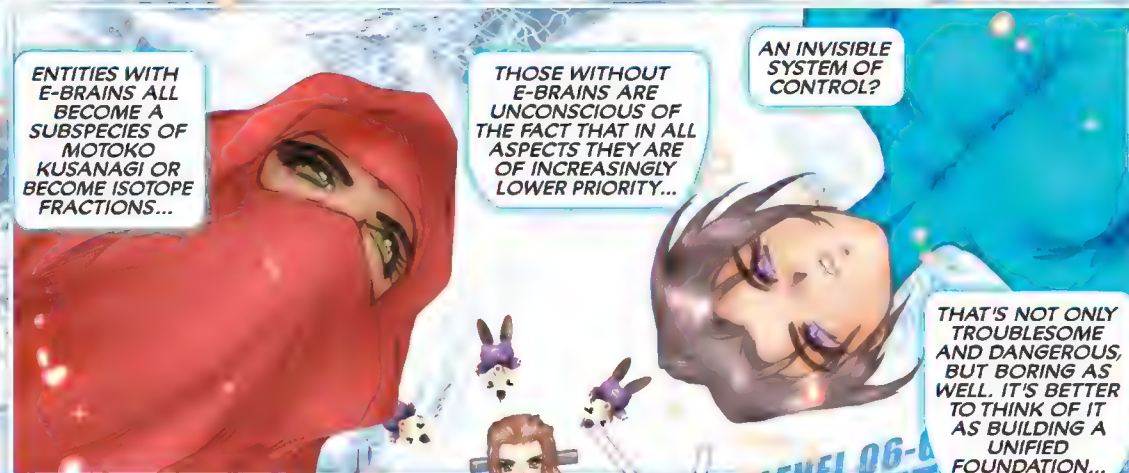
WHAT'S THIS...?!

LOOKS LIKE THE FOUNDATIONS ARE BEING LAID FOR A MASSIVE FUSION... MAYBE...?

YOU THINK IT'S A BRAIN EXPANSION?

FUSION USUALLY TAKES PLACE IN A SINGLE HUMAN BRAIN, SO SOME ELEMENTS ARE ALWAYS LOST. THAT'S JUST PART OF THE METABOLIC PROCESS.

BY LINKING E-BRAIN AIs, IF THE BIOLOGICAL RESTRICTIONS CAN BE OVERCOME, YOU COULD HAVE MULTIPLE-- THEORETICALLY EVEN INFINITE--PERSONALITIES ENCAPSULATED IN ONE.



ENTITIES WITH E-BRAINS ALL BECOME A SUBSPECIES OF MOTOKO KUSANAGI OR BECOME ISOTOPE FRACTIONS...

THOSE WITHOUT E-BRAINS ARE UNCONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT IN ALL ASPECTS THEY ARE OF INCREASINGLY LOWER PRIORITY...

AN INVISIBLE SYSTEM OF CONTROL?

THAT'S NOT ONLY TROUBLESOME AND DANGEROUS, BUT BORING AS WELL. IT'S BETTER TO THINK OF IT AS BUILDING A UNIFIED FOUNDATION...



SO IT'S THE PROCESS LEADING UP TO DEATH...?

IT'S THE PROCESS OF LIFE... WITHOUT IT, IT MEANS YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.



SOMEONE OUGHT TO PAY SOMETHING FOR HAVING USED OUR COMPANY'S PIGS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT...

"SOMEONE OUGHT TO PAY SOMETHING FOR HAVING USED OUR COMPANY'S PIGS FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT..."

USING ONLY A PORTION FOR A GOOD CAUSE DIDN'T RESULT IN ANY GREAT LOSSES... DON'T YOU THINK THERE'S AN EVEN GREATER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACKS AND THE BOMBING?

NO. 20
(MILLENNIUM),
HAS BEEN TAKEN
OVER BY NO. 11
(ARAMAKI), SO
THE BRAIN
EXPANSION PLANS
ARE CALLED OFF

THAT'S A NORMAL
DECISION WHEN
FUSION ACTUALLY
TAKES PLACE, BUT
UNFORTUNATELY
SHE SEEMS TO HAVE
NO INTENTION OF
FUSING...

STRANGE...

SOMETHING'S REALLY
WEIRD WITH THE
LANGUAGE FIELD
HERE. GIVE ME A
PROGRESS REPORT
ON THE MAIN-
BARRIER FUSION!

LEX HAS
BEEN
FROZEN!
MAIN
BARRIER
FUSION
91%!

WE HAVE AN
ABNORMALITY
IN THE
RIGHT-SIDE
HEARING!

RIGHT-SIDE
HEARING?

WHAT
THE--?!

WE'VE LOST
RESPONSE
FROM MAIN
BARRIERS!
OPERATION
IS NORMAL!

TIME-DIFFERENTIAL
GATES HAVE STOPPED
FUNCTIONING! MADE
ATTEMPT TO WIPE AND
REBUILD, BUT THERE'S
NO RESPONSE!

UM...
MISTRESS?

COMBAT
MODE
SHIFTING
TO STANDBY
DUE TO
LOSS OF
TARGETS...

WE'RE NOT
GETTING ANY
COMMANDS...
WHAT
SHOULD
WE DO?

LET'S DO A
STRUCTURAL
ANALYSIS AS
SOON AS THE
HARDWARE
COOLS TO
RECOMMENDED
OPERATING
TEMPERATURE!

OH,
BOY!
LET'S!

VERY WELL...

WHEN THE AGENTS UNDER MOTOKO II START DOING THEIR STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, WE'LL SPLIT UP AND START THE SUPPRESSION.

SHE'S NOT INTERESTED IN FUSION... WE SHOULD ERASE ANY RELATED DATA.

WARNING!
A LIVE FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT HAS OCCURRED.
RESISTANCE IS NOT AN OPTION.
FUSION OF DATA HAS BEEN INITIATED.
CRITICAL DATA DELETING.

WELL? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? DO WE NEED TO CREATE A NEW, EQUIVALENT ENTITY IN ORDER TO DECIDE?

WE CAN SCRAP MOTOKO II...

WHAT YOU PROPOSE IS FINE IF WE'RE JUST WHILING AWAY THE TIME HERE, BUT WE DON'T NEED ANY SPECIAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF AN EXISTING CONDITION. LET'S SCRAP AND ABSORB MOTOKO II AND THEN DECIDE.

IT'D BE HELPFUL IF HER TENDENCY TO MAKE HURRIED DECISIONS AT TIMES WHEN SHE'S PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES COULD CHANGE.

IF WE'RE REALLY GOING TO GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF DOING A BRAIN EXPANSION, THEN WE CAN'T EXPECT ANY MORE FUSION AND GROWTH.

AND IF WE CONTINUE WITH BRAIN EXPANSION, THE PROBLEM IS THAT EVEN IF MORE BRANCHING OF THE "SLEEPING UNIVERSE" OCCURS, IT'LL EVENTUALLY RESULT IN DESTRUCTION THROUGH THAT OLD PHENOMENON OF "HARDENING OF THE ARTERIES"...

SO YOU DON'T WANT TO GROW ANYMORE?

THE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS HAS BEGUN...

LOOKS LIKE HER AGENTS ARE STUCK AT THE LEVEL 2 PERIPHERAL HARD E-BRAIN...

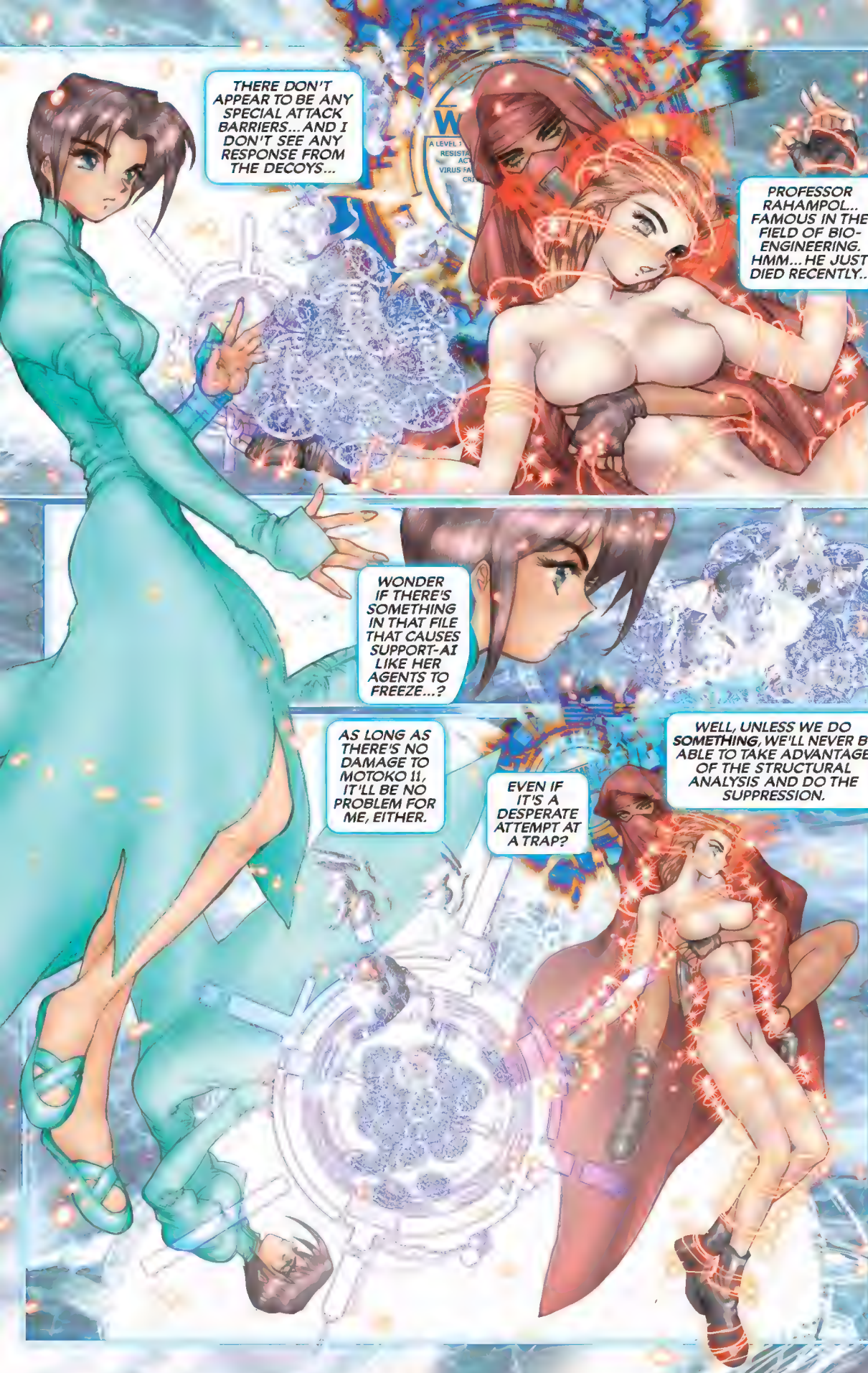
?

THEY'RE HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH A SMALL FILE NAMED "PROFESSOR RAHAMPOL."

I WONDER IF THIS IS A TRAP THAT'D WORK ON OUR FRIENDS, TOO...?

WHY HURRY ONLY TO DIE OF OLD AGE?

I'VE HEARD THAT NAME SOMEWHERE BEFORE... I'LL CHECK IT BEFORE WE MAKE CONTACT.



THERE DON'T
APPEAR TO BE ANY
SPECIAL ATTACK
BARRIERS...AND I
DON'T SEE ANY
RESPONSE FROM
THE DECOYS...

PROFESSOR
RAHAMPOL...
FAMOUS IN THE
FIELD OF BIO-
ENGINEERING.
HMM... HE JUST
DIED RECENTLY...

WONDER
IF THERE'S
SOMETHING
IN THAT FILE
THAT CAUSES
SUPPORT-AI
LIKE HER
AGENTS TO
FREEZE...?

AS LONG AS
THERE'S NO
DAMAGE TO
MOTOKO II,
IT'LL BE NO
PROBLEM FOR
ME, EITHER.

EVEN IF
IT'S A
DESPERATE
ATTEMPT AT
A TRAP?

WELL, UNLESS WE DO
SOMETHING, WE'LL NEVER BE
ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF THE STRUCTURAL
ANALYSIS AND DO THE
SUPPRESSION.



NO...
LOOKS LIKE
A SYSTEM
BLUEPRINT.

YOU
THINK
THAT
WOULD
CAUSE
AN AI
LOCKUP?

?? IS
THIS SOME
KIND OF A
PHILOSOPHY
TEXT FOR
ALIENS?

LEVEL OF GHOSTLINE
CAUTION!

THINK WE
SHOULD
TRY
ACTIVATING
IT
VIRTUALLY?


I'M
GOING TO
ANALYZE
IT.

MAYBE
THAT'S
WHAT THE
AGENTS
DID...


NOW
WHAT...?!

IT'S
GROWING.


LOOKS
LIKE A
TYPE
OF AI.




BASIC
STRUCTURAL
UNITS ARE OF
THE
MONOGATE
TYPE...
INDIVIDUALIZED
BUT CROSS-
LINKED.



THE UNITS'
PRIORITY-
ORDERING IS
MODULATING
AS THEY
GROW...



LOOKS LIKE
HER AGENTS'
REVOLT-
PREVENTION
MECHANISM
ACTIVATED
AND CAUSED
THEM TO
FREEZE UP.




YES...IT MUST
BE AN AI
WHERE USER
COMMANDS
AREN'T GIVEN
TOP PRIORITY.




LOOK! SOME
AMORPHOUS
SILICON IS
FORMING A
NEURO-
MATRIX....!

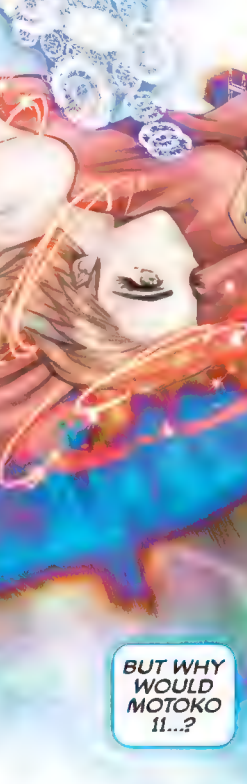
WARNING!!
A LEVEL 1 FUNCTIONAL CONTACT HAS OCCURRED.
RESISTANCE STRATEGY: AVOIDANCE CURRENTLY
NOT Viable. REPAIRING DEFENSE BARRIERS.
CRITICAL OVERLAP IDENTIFIED



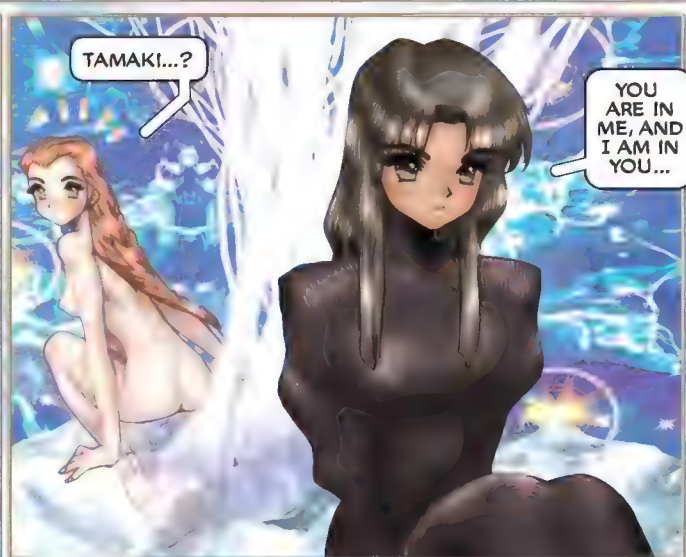
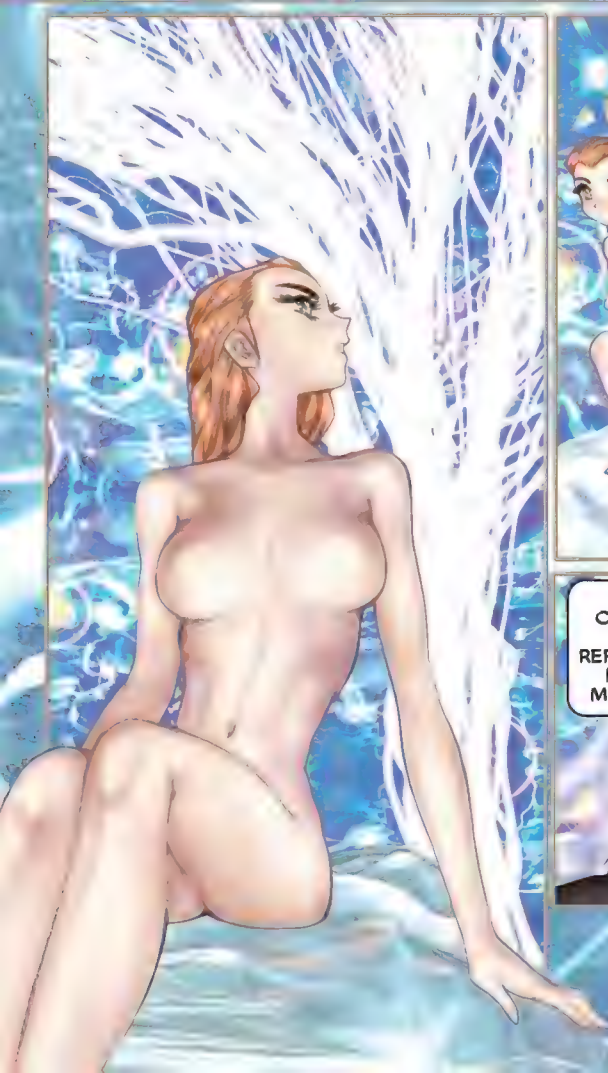
THIS IS NOT THE
SORT OF TOOL
HUMANS
NORMALLY LIKE
TO USE... BOTH
HARDWARE AND
SOFTWARE ARE
FUNCTIONING
AUTONOMOUSLY!



AH! IT'S NOT
AN AI! THIS IS
A BLUEPRINT
FOR A HIGHLY
INTELLIGENT
SILICON-
BASED
LIFE-FORM!



BUT WHY
WOULD
MOTOKO
II...?



TAMAKI!...?

YOU
ARE IN
ME, AND
I AM IN
YOU...



YOU
CHOOSE
THE
REFLECTION
IN THE
MIRROR...

...BECAUSE THE
UNIVERSE IS
ASYMMETRICAL.



ARE WE
IMPRISONED...?

IMPRISONED...?
WHICH OF "US"...?



I CAN'T
LOCATE THE
"NORTH
STARS"...

THEY'RE
OVER
HERE.



THEY'VE
BEEN HERE
FROM THE
BEGINNING.

HERE'S THE
HORIZON POINT
YOU THOUGHT
YOU WANTED
TO ACCESS...



NO, NOT
THAT... I'M
TALKING
ABOUT THAT
GIANT THING,
ALWAYS
GLOWING OFF
IN THE
DISTANCE!

THIS
IS IT.



IF YOU
CONTACT
ONE LIGHT,
YOU'LL
PERCEIVE
A NEW
HORIZON.

IF YOU CONTACT
ALL THREE LIGHTS,
YOU'LL CONTINUE
ON TO SOMEONE
ON THE BORDER...



IS THIS SOME
SORT OF
PARADOXICAL
"RIDDLE OF THE
SPHINX"...? OR ARE
YOU JUST TESTING
THE DEPTHS OF
MY DESIRE?

NO, I'M ONLY
PROVIDING
THE DATA...
YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO HAS
TO CHOOSE
YOUR COURSE.



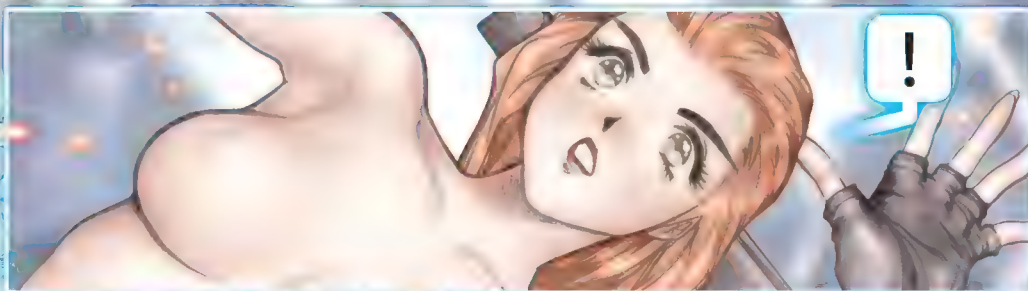
FOR WHAT
PURPOSE,
THOUGH?
AND WHAT'S
THIS ALL
MEAN?

AN ANSWER
WILL ONLY
BE REVEALED
TO THE ONE
WHO SEEKS
IT... YES?

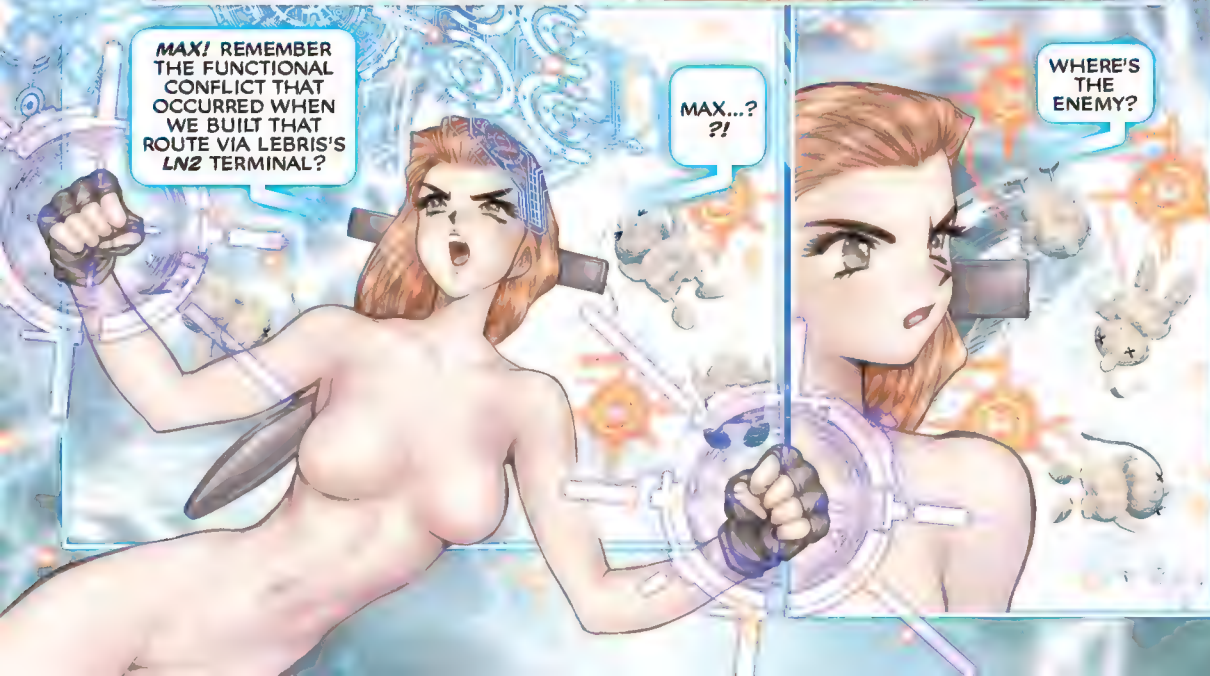




CARTOON! GHOSTLINE!

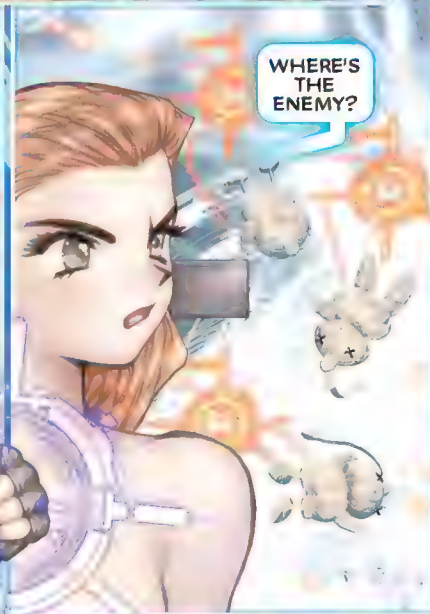


!



MAX! REMEMBER THE FUNCTIONAL CONFLICT THAT OCCURRED WHEN WE BUILT THAT ROUTE VIA LEBRIS'S LN2 TERMINAL?

MAX...? ?!



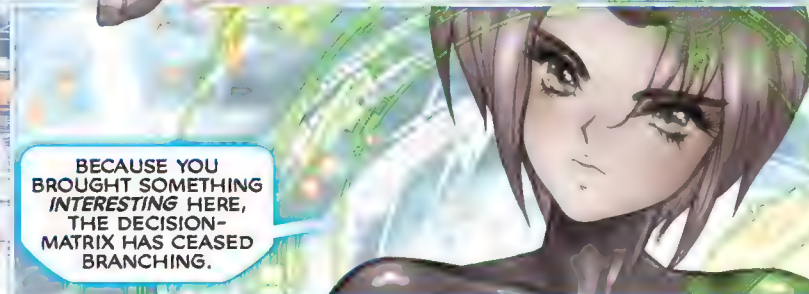
WHERE'S THE ENEMY?



!

THE WORD "ENEMY" IS NOT APPROPRIATE HERE.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO FROZE YOUR AGENTS, NO. 11!



BECAUSE YOU BROUGHT SOMETHING INTERESTING HERE, THE DECISION-MATRIX HAS CEASED BRANCHING.

BUT WHAT WAS YOUR BUSINESS? PAYMENT FOR THE PIGS? COMBAT SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES? OR JUST CURIOSITY? I DON'T THINK YOU WERE INTERESTED IN FUSION...




IT'S MY JOB...YOU KNOW THAT.

WHAT IF YOU JUST SAID YOU NEVER SAW ANYTHING...?

AHH...OF ALL POSSIBLE ANSWERS, YOU WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE OF THE LEAST INTERESTING.

BUT I'LL GO ALONG WITH IT. SO...YOU'VE FULFILLED YOUR OBJECTIVE, RIGHT? WHAT OTHER BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE? IF NONE, GET OUT OF HERE... I'M BUSY.



YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY THINK I'LL FALL FOR THAT BLUFF, DO YOU? EVEN IF THE MAIN BARRIERS AND ARMED ARRAYS ARE THE SAME AND INEFFECTIVE...

...I'M THE ONE WHO'S CLOSEST TO THE HUBBLE MIRROR CONTROLS.

TOO BAD, SINCE IT'S PHYSICALLY SO CLOSE TO ME. VERY WELL--WHAT DO YOU WANT?

INFORMATION! I WANT TO KNOW IF YOUR PROBLEM IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME IN THE FUTURE...

...AND WHAT IS THIS "SOMETHING INTERESTING" YOU MENTIONED?

YOU PLAN TO FUSE WITH THEM?

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

THE BLUEPRINT FOR A SILICON LIFE-FORM. I WANT TO PUT TOGETHER ONE OF THESE MYSELF.

MEMES CAN ENDURE THE FOUR BUDDHIST SUFFERINGS OF BEING BORN, AGING, FALLING ILL, AND DYING, BUT THEY'RE ALSO A NEW LIFE-FORM, WITH CONTINUITY.

IF THE LIFE-FORM'S INTELLIGENCE IS BASED ON THE MANKIND'S MEME POOL, IT'S LIKE MANKIND IN A MIRROR.

DON'T WE NEED SOME INSURANCE...?

YOU'RE AWFULLY PESSIMISTIC, AREN'T YOU? THERE'S ACTUALLY NO NEED. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THE TWO COEXIST OR NOT AS LONG AS THEY DON'T SELF-DESTRUCT.

YOU MEAN THAT AS LONG AS THEY'RE CONNECTED, THAT'S A GUARANTEE? MANKIND AND MANKIND'S ACTIVITIES MIGHT NOT ALWAYS BE PERCEIVED BY IT IN A POSITIVE LIGHT, YOU KNOW.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR OVER-PROTECTIVE OPINION, WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY SLANTED IN FAVOR OF MANKIND.

BUT IT'S NOT THE CASE. MANKIND AND THIS LIFE-FORM ARE BOTH SEPARATE AND THE SAME.

IF IT FUSES WITH YOU AND LEARNS OF THE "TREE," RIGHT?

BUT THERE'S NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THAT AND ANY GUARANTEE OF SECURITY.

NO... YOU'RE WRONG.

THE KNOWN UNIVERSE CAN BE INSTANTLY EXPANDED. SURELY, YOU MUST REALIZE THE ADVANTAGES OF THAT...?

VERY WELL. LET'S SET UP A HOTLINE BETWEEN US, THEN...

...AND LET'S HANDLE THE LIFE-FORM TOGETHER.

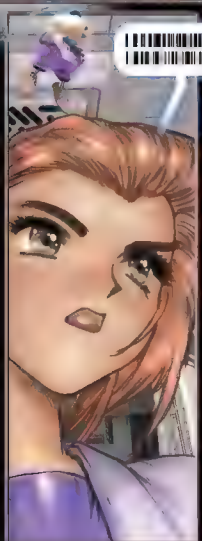
SO... WE'VE FINALLY GOT A DEAL.

I DON'T HAVE ANY PROBLEM WITH THAT.

I'VE GOT SOME OTHER BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF... I'LL CONTACT YOU LATER.

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SO VAGUE... BACK IN "REALITY" THE ASSAULT FORCES ARE ABOUT TO BURN RIGHT THROUGH THE DOOR, YES?

SEE YOU.





ACTIVATE
ACTION-
RESTRAINT
VIRUS FOR
THE POWERED
SUITS!

SHAKK CHAKK





WHAT'S
THAT
SMOKE?

HALON GAS. IT'S
SCREWING UP
OUR IR SENSORS
BECAUSE IT HAS
HIGH HEAT
ABSORPTION.

IT'S ONE OF
OUR OWN
PRODUCTS,
TOO.

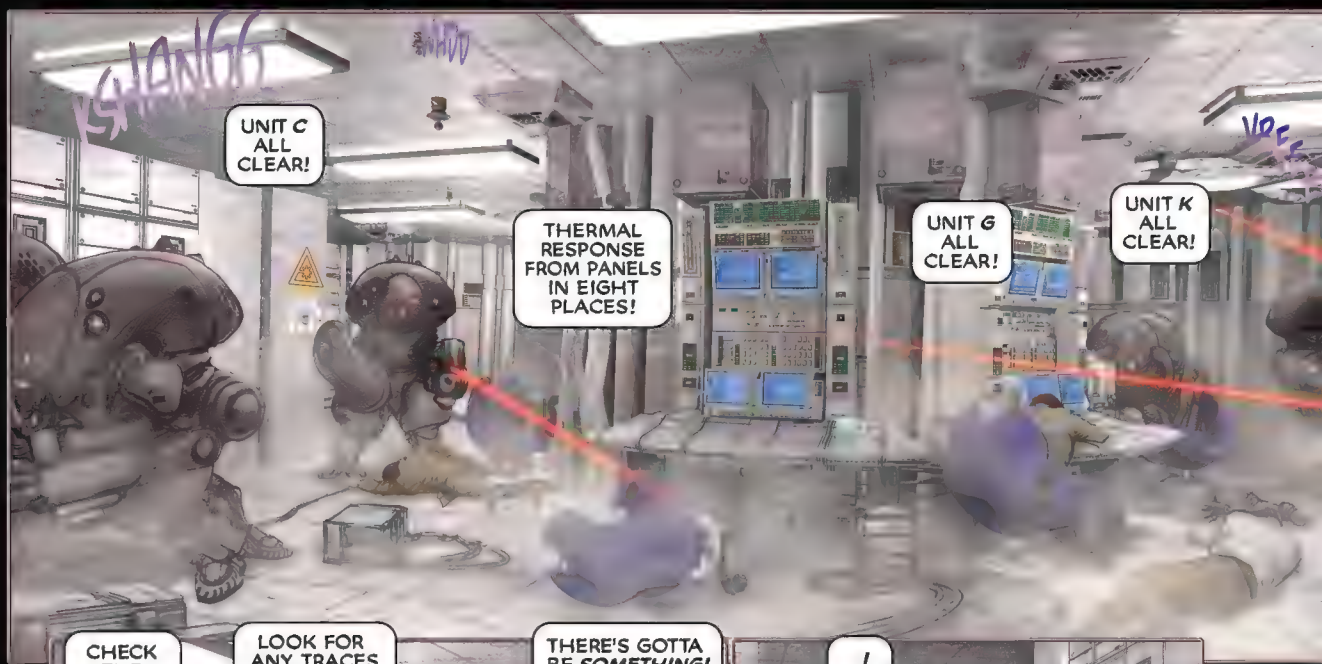
ALL STAFF ARE
COLLAPSED ON
THE FLOOR
INSIDE... DOING
A CHECK RIGHT
NOW... VISUAL
FIELD LOOKS
CLEAR.

OKAY.
GO!

KSHANNGG

KRNCH

KSHANNGG



UNIT C
ALL
CLEAR!

THERMAL
RESPONSE
FROM PANELS
IN EIGHT
PLACES!

UNIT G
ALL
CLEAR!

UNIT K
ALL
CLEAR!

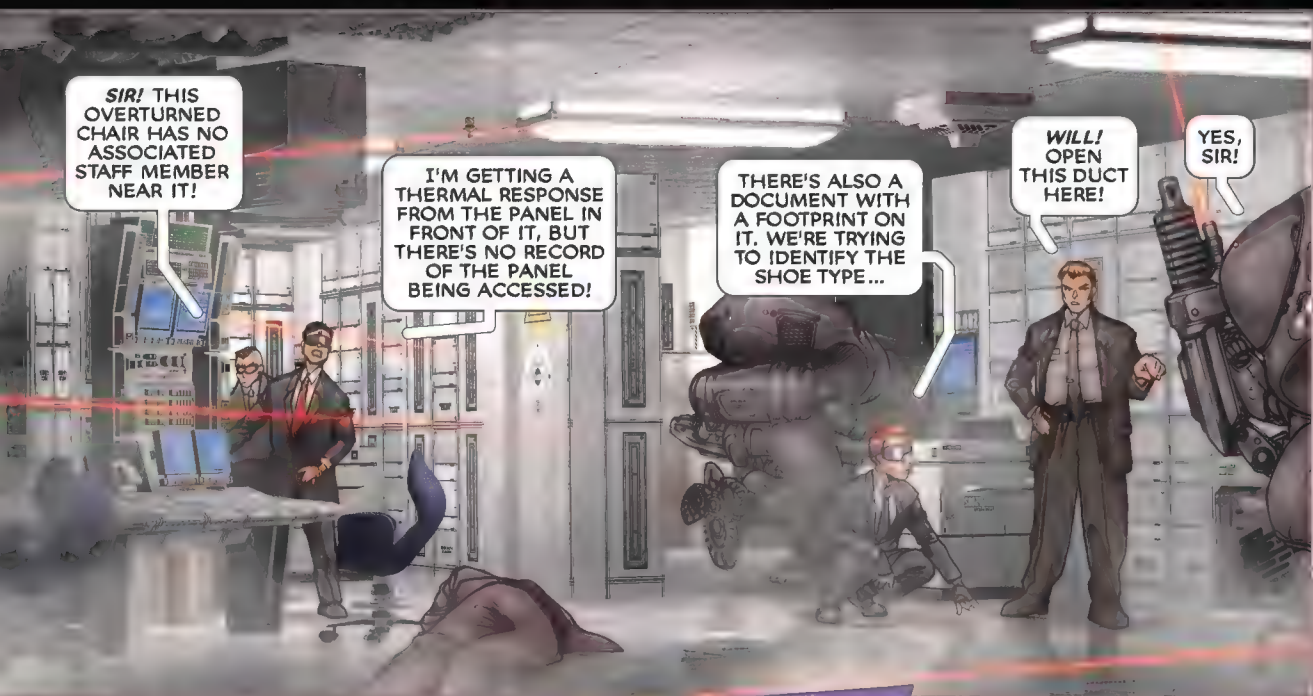
CHECK
THE
COOLING
DUCTS!

LOOK FOR
ANY TRACES
OF DUST
LAYERS
HAVING BEEN
DISTURBED!

THERE'S GOTTA
BE *SOMETHING*!
SEARCH THE
PLACE WITH A
FINE-TOOTH
COMB, AND WATCH
FOR OPTICAL
CAMOUFLAGE!

!





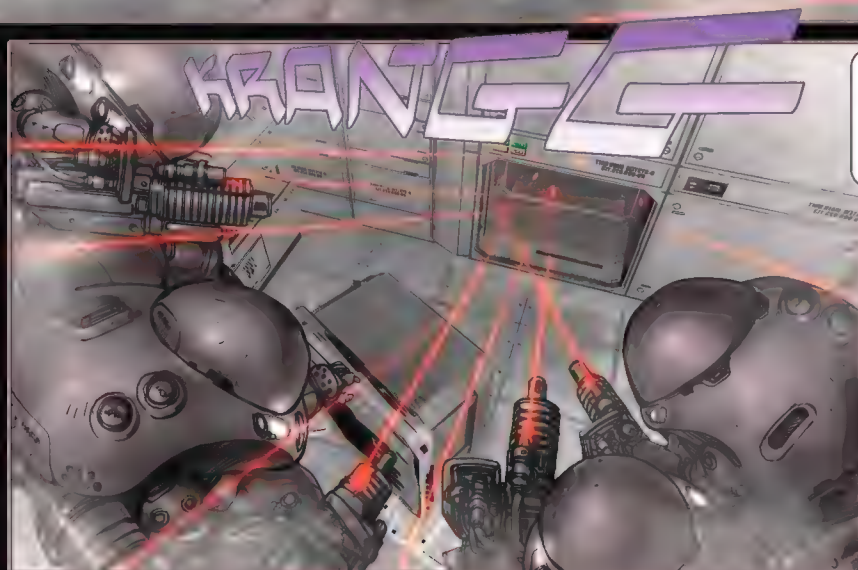
SIR! THIS OVERTURNED CHAIR HAS NO ASSOCIATED STAFF MEMBER NEAR IT!

I'M GETTING A THERMAL RESPONSE FROM THE PANEL IN FRONT OF IT, BUT THERE'S NO RECORD OF THE PANEL BEING ACCESSED!

THERE'S ALSO A DOCUMENT WITH A FOOTPRINT ON IT. WE'RE TRYING TO IDENTIFY THE SHOE TYPE...

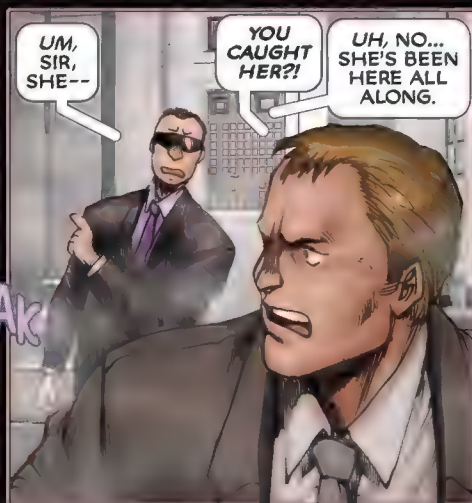
WILL! OPEN THIS DUCT HERE!

YES, SIR!



SENSORS DETECT NO RESPONSE OF ANY TYPE, SIR.

ORDER UP A FULL SUITE OF SEARCH CEBOTS AND SEND THEM IN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!



UM, SIR, SHE--

YOU CAUGHT HER?!

UH, NO... SHE'S BEEN HERE ALL ALONG.

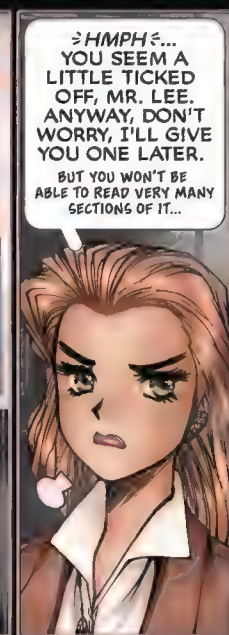


TRYING TO PREVENT ME FROM LEAVING, ARE YOU? SAY IT AIN'T SO!

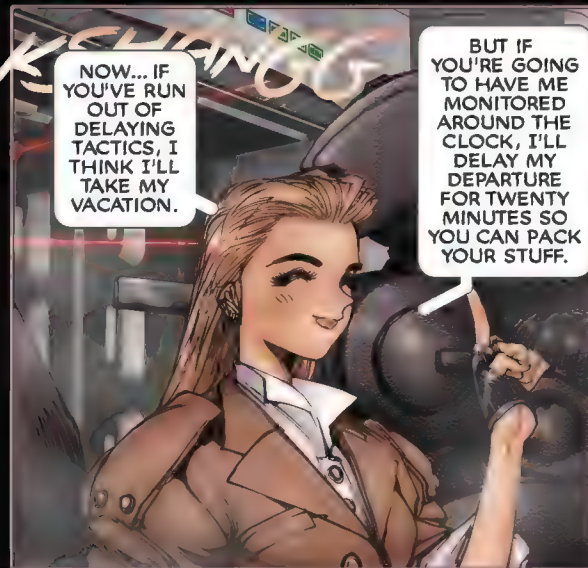
SORRY, MISS... PRESIDENT'S ORDERS.



I'M ASSUMING YOU'LL BE ABLE PROVIDE US WITH A MEANINGFUL REPORT ON THIS.



SHMPH... YOU SEEM A LITTLE TICKED OFF, MR. LEE. ANYWAY, DON'T WORRY, I'LL GIVE YOU ONE LATER. BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO READ VERY MANY SECTIONS OF IT...



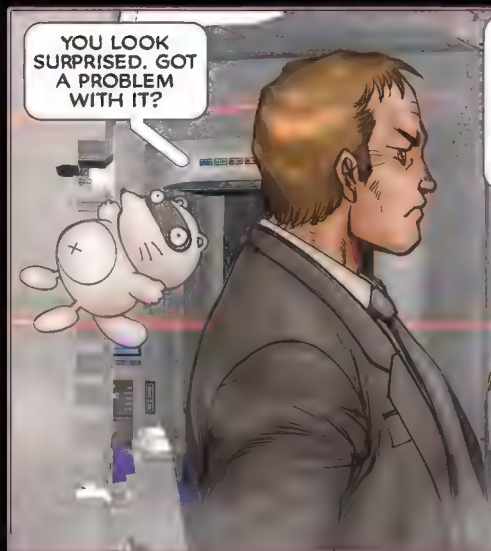
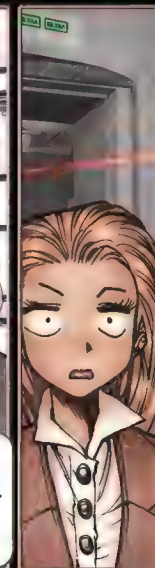
NOW... IF YOU'VE RUN OUT OF DELAYING TACTICS, I THINK I'LL TAKE MY VACATION.

BUT IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE ME MONITORED AROUND THE CLOCK, I'LL DELAY MY DEPARTURE FOR TWENTY MINUTES SO YOU CAN PACK YOUR STUFF.



SORRY. THE SECURITY DEPARTMENT WILL NEED TO KEEP YOUR PRIVATE PLANE, TO RUN A CHECK ON IT. THE DOCUMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SENT TO THE EXAMINER'S OFFICE.

IT'LL TAKE AT LEAST TWO DAYS FOR US TO RUN ALL THE TESTS, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT IN ANY CASE.

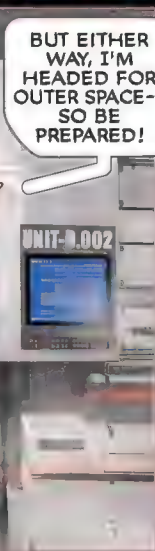


YOU LOOK SURPRISED. GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT?

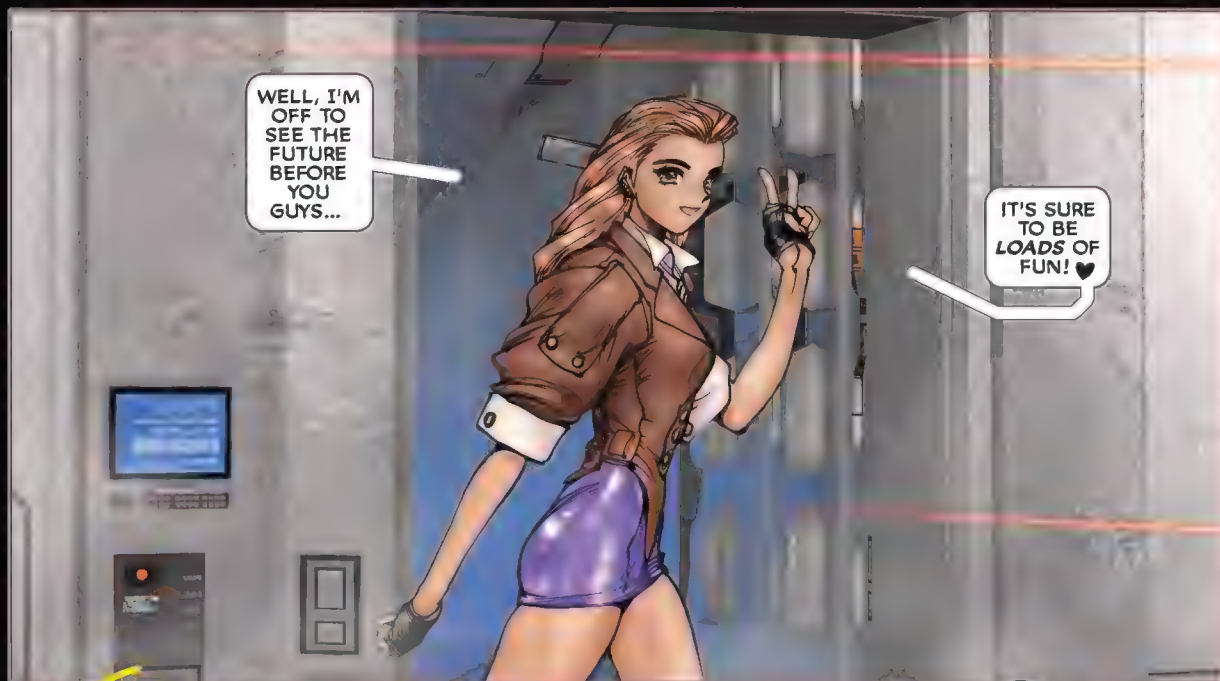
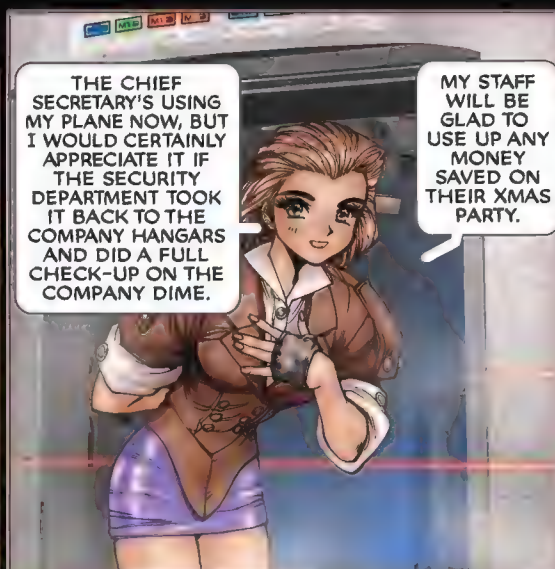
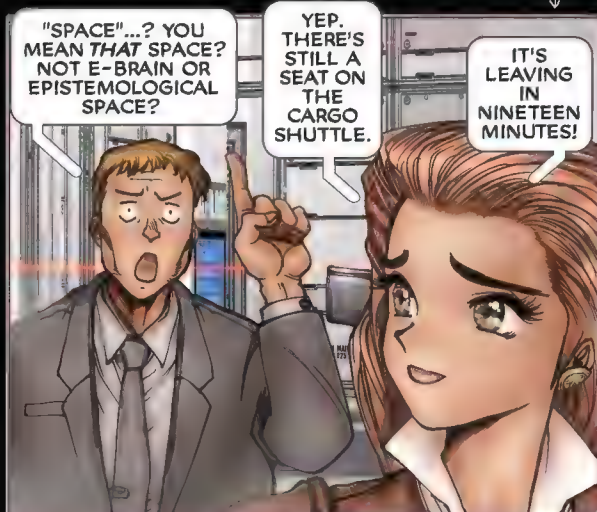
NO...NO PROBLEM AT ALL! HEH HEH... I KNOW THAT TO BE TRUSTED, INTERNAL SECURITY'S GOTTA ACT TOUGH!



BUT EITHER WAY, I'M HEADED FOR OUTER SPACE-- SO BE PREPARED!



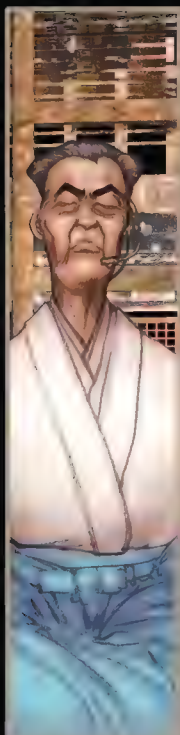
She's interfering with wind speed data to delay departure. ↘



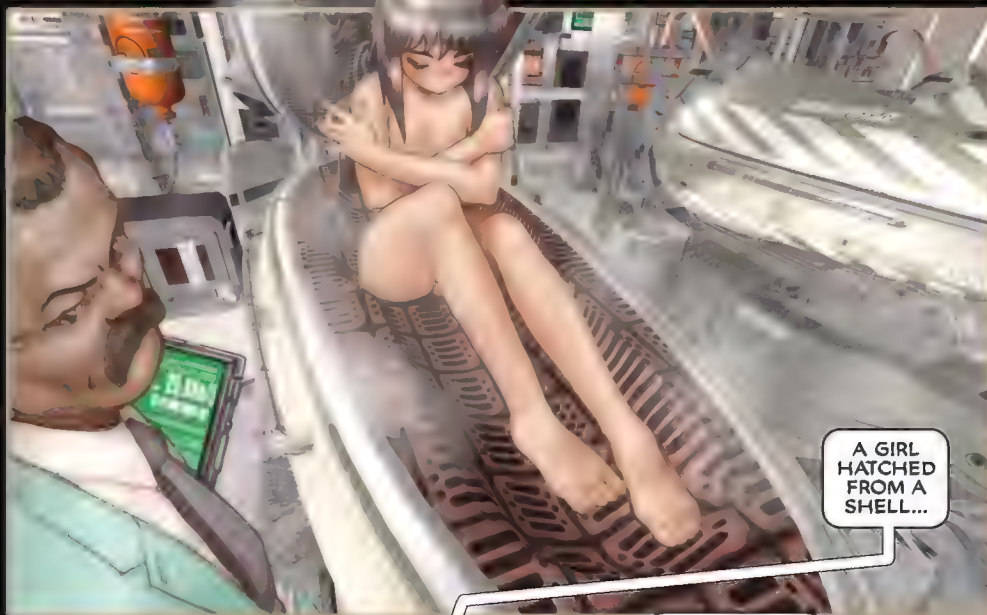


06 EPILOGUE

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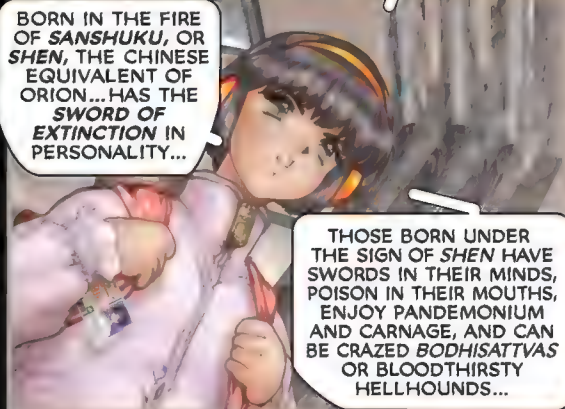




A GIRL HATCHED FROM A SHELL...

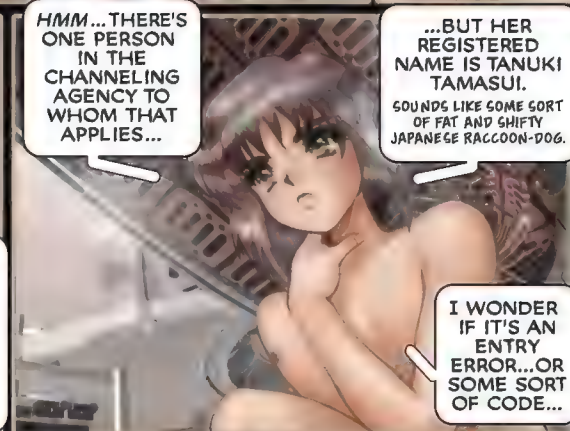


BORN IN THE FIRE OF **SANSHUKU**, OR **SHEN**, THE CHINESE EQUIVALENT OF ORION... HAS THE **SWORD OF EXTINCTION** IN PERSONALITY...



THOSE BORN UNDER THE SIGN OF **SHEN** HAVE SWORDS IN THEIR MINDS, POISON IN THEIR MOUTHS, ENJOY PANDEMONIUM AND CARNAGE, AND CAN BE CRAZED **BODHISATTVAS** OR BLOODTHIRSTY HELLHOUNDS...

HMM... THERE'S ONE PERSON IN THE CHANNELING AGENCY TO WHOM THAT APPLIES...



...BUT HER REGISTERED NAME IS **TANUKI TAMASUI**. SOUNDS LIKE SOME SORT OF FAT AND SHIFTY JAPANESE RACCOON-DOG.

I WONDER IF IT'S AN ENTRY ERROR... OR SOME SORT OF CODE...

When a cyborg's entire body is a prosthesis, its exterior doesn't have to look the same age as that of the living brain portion inside. But there are sometimes problems when a child's brain is implanted in an adult prosthetic body, and these problems can affect personality development. As a result, most brains are given prosthetic bodies that match them well. In this story, we are assuming people either want prosthetic bodies that look the way they did when they were younger, or that they want natural-looking bodies appropriate to their true age...



SO YOU
CAME
TO THE
REALM
OF THE
DEAD?

HERE THE
DEAD ARE STILL
LIVING... EVEN
THOUGH THEY
DON'T HAVE
MINDS OR
BODIES.



MM. CHARACTERS
AND LETTERS ARE
MIRRORS ON THE
SOUL--BOOKS
ARE THEIR BODY.
LIFE CAN BE
DEFINED IN SO
MANY DIFFERENT
WAYS...

WELL, THE CONFLICT
BETWEEN WARRIORS
AND THOSE WHO
BELIEVE IN THE
SACRED POWERS OF
LANGUAGE HAS BEEN
GOING FOR OVER
800 YEARS...THE PEN
VERSUS THE SWORD.



MOTOKO...
DO YOU
HAVE
DREAMS?



YOU MEAN,
DO I HAVE
GOALS
THAT CAN
ACTUALLY
BE
ACHIEVED
WITH
EFFORT?

OR ARE YOU
ASKING IF--IN MORE
VULGAR TERMS--
I YEARN FOR SOME
IMPOSSIBLE,
FLEETING IDEAL...?

WHAT DO YOU
USE FOR SELF-
REALIZATION...?

RIGHT NOW,
IF THIS VERY
INSTANT
PROVIDES THE
BEST LONG
AND SHORT-
TERM CHOICES,
THE BEST LIFE
IS PROBABLY
THE AGGREGATE
OF ALL THOSE
CHOICES, YES?

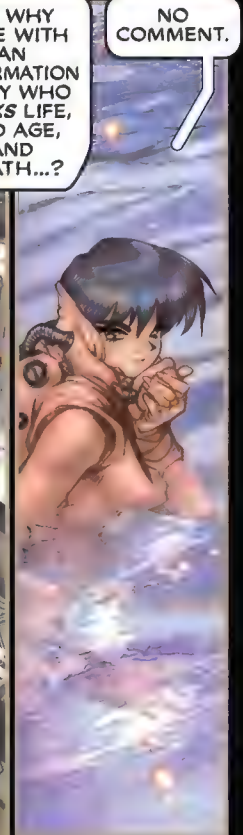
AND IS
THAT WHY
DEATH IS
ACCEPTABLE?

WHAT REAL
ADVANTAGES
HAS A HIGHLY
SOPHISTICATED
PROSTHETIC
BODY--FAR MORE
ADVANCED THAN
A HUMAN BODY--
GIVEN YOU?

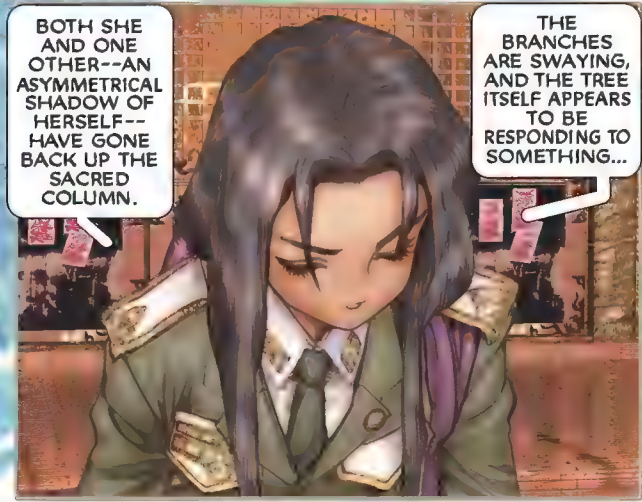
I SUPPOSE A
PSYCHOLOGIST
MIGHT SAY
THIS IS THE
REVENGE OF
THE "REAL"
BODY I LOST
AS A GIRL.

SO WHY
FUSE WITH
AN
INFORMATION
DEITY WHO
SEEKS LIFE,
OLD AGE,
AND
DEATH...?

NO
COMMENT.

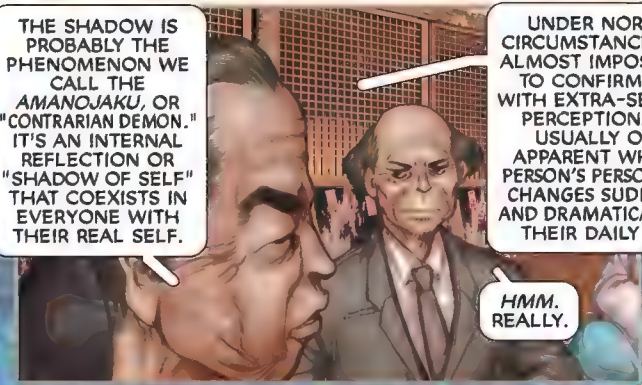






BOTH SHE AND ONE OTHER--AN ASYMMETRICAL SHADOW OF HERSELF-- HAVE GONE BACK UP THE SACRED COLUMN.

THE BRANCHES ARE SWAYING, AND THE TREE ITSELF APPEARS TO BE RESPONDING TO SOMETHING...



THE SHADOW IS PROBABLY THE PHENOMENON WE CALL THE AMANOJAKU, OR "CONTRARIAN DEMON." IT'S AN INTERNAL REFLECTION OR "SHADOW OF SELF" THAT COEXISTS IN EVERYONE WITH THEIR REAL SELF.

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CONFIRM THIS WITH EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION. IT'S USUALLY ONLY APPARENT WHEN A PERSON'S PERSONALITY CHANGES SUDDENLY AND DRAMATICALLY IN THEIR DAILY LIFE.

HMM. REALLY.

In the Chimeric Agency it is believed that the human mind has an internal and external hierarchical structure. What we think of as a "self" is merely one layer in this structure. Similarly, the "spirit" which we generally refer to as our "self" is actually managed from a higher level, and everything is linked to everything else.

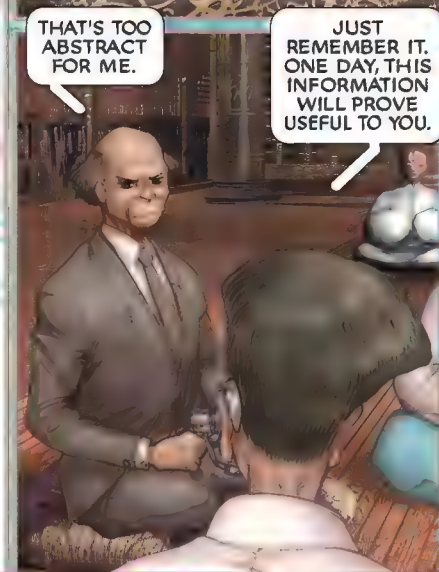


THE ROOTS OF THE TREE ARE ERUPTING FROM ONE POINT, AND REVOLVING...



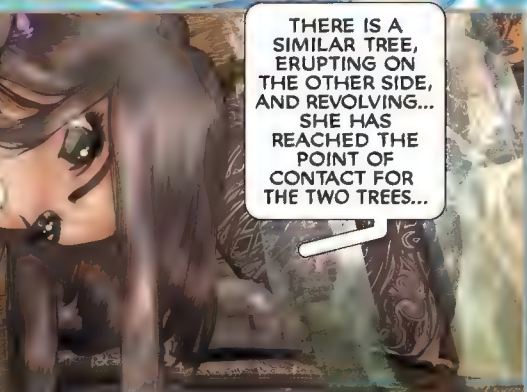
IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM, SOMETHING HUGE, INFLUENTIAL WILL EMERGE...

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT IT IS, SPECIFICALLY, BUT IT IS OUR JOB TO DETERMINE ITS NATURE.

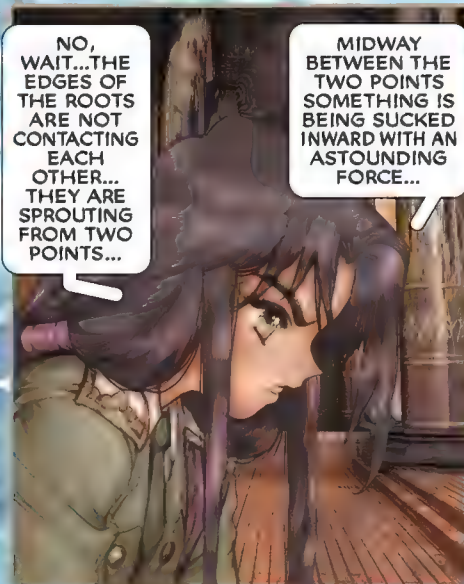


THAT'S TOO ABSTRACT FOR ME.

JUST REMEMBER IT. ONE DAY, THIS INFORMATION WILL PROVE USEFUL TO YOU.



THERE IS A SIMILAR TREE, ERUPTING ON THE OTHER SIDE, AND REVOLVING... SHE HAS REACHED THE POINT OF CONTACT FOR THE TWO TREES...



NO, WAIT...THE EDGES OF THE ROOTS ARE NOT CONTACTING EACH OTHER... THEY ARE SPROUTING FROM TWO POINTS...

MIDWAY BETWEEN THE TWO POINTS SOMETHING IS BEING SUCKED INWARD WITH AN ASTOUNDING FORCE...



I SEE THREE IDENTICAL STRUCTURES...

AH...IT'S THE THREE-LEGGED CROW...!!

THERE'S A CONNECTION HERE... IT MAY BE A YATAGARASU, THE SACRED CROW THAT SERVES AS A GUIDE IN JAPAN'S CREATION MYTHS...

APPROACH TOO CLOSE, AND IT FEELS LIKE YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE SUCKED IN...

BRAIN ACTIVITY HAS REACHED A DANGEROUS THRESHOLD, SIR.

ACTIVATE SUPPRESSION IMPLANT.

ASCENDING A TREE WITH AN AMANOJAKU DEMON...A CROW IN THE BRANCHES...

HEY, I'VE HEARD OF THIS IN AN OLD FAIRY TALE SOMEWHERE!

YES...IN STRUCTURE, IT RESEMBLES THE JAPANESE CREATION MYTHS.





FOLK AND FAIRY TALES USUALLY PROMOTE A SOCIAL NORM, EXAGGERATE HISTORICAL FACTS, OR ARE USED TO FANTASIZE, YES?

SO IF SIMILAR MYTHS AND FOLKTALES EXIST IN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND CULTURES, IS IT BECAUSE ALL HUMANS SHARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME SOCIAL NORMS AND IDEALS?

THE CROW HAS THREE EYES...

EVEN IN THIS E-BRAIN AGE, THE CONCEPTS "SEEN" BY CHANNELERS CAN'T BE ACCURATELY EXPRESSED OR TRANSMITTED TO OTHERS. THEY'RE UNIQUE TO EACH INDIVIDUAL.

CONSIDER AGES PAST, WHEN SOME PEOPLE LOOKED AT VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS FROM A DISTANCE AND DECLARED THEM TO BE "GIANT TREES THAT GREW TO HEAVEN OVERNIGHT."

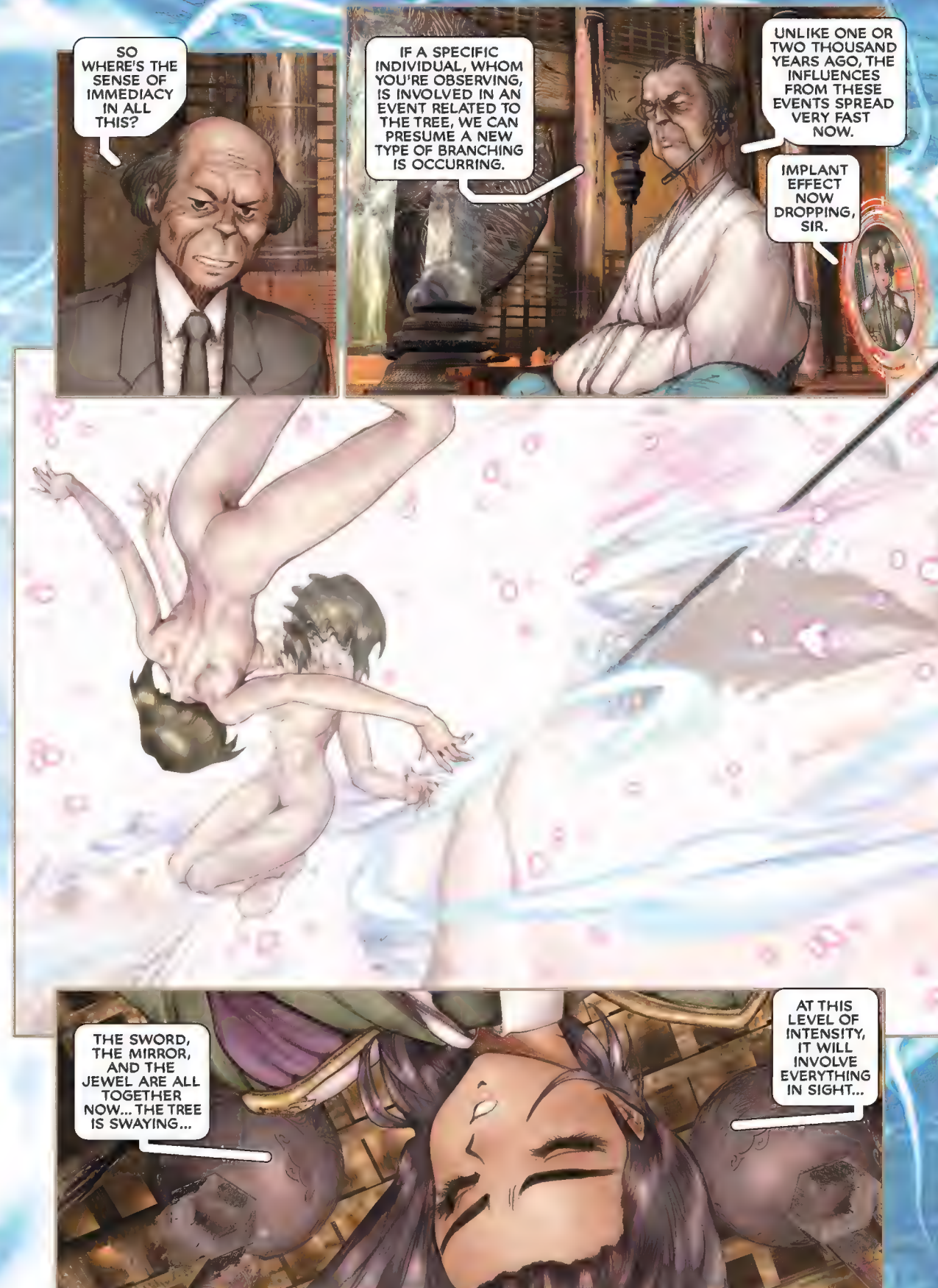
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, BATOU! OUR CHANNELER'S AT WORK HERE AND, MEDICALLY SPEAKING, IN A *UNIQUE* CONDITION. LINKING NOW MIGHT DAMAGE HER BRAIN CELLS!

THE MYTHS AND FOLKLORE TRANSMITTED OFTEN HAVE SIMILARITIES IN THEIR ESSENTIAL FRAMEWORK.

THEY DIFFER IN DETAILS, BUT BECAUSE THEY CAN ALSO GUIDE US PSYCHOLOGICALLY, WE CHOOSE TO NOT CONCENTRATE ON THE DIFFERENCES.

SHE'S LOOKING AT THE "TREE" NOW... YOU SECTION 9 PEOPLE WOULD PROBABLY REFER TO IT AS A "SYSTEM TREE." HOWEVER, IT'S A CONCEPT THAT'S BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

THE CROW IS REVOLVING... NOW IT LOOKS LIKE A BLACK HOLE WITH ARMS...



SO WHERE'S THE SENSE OF IMMEDIACY IN ALL THIS?

IF A SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL, WHOM YOU'RE OBSERVING, IS INVOLVED IN AN EVENT RELATED TO THE TREE, WE CAN PRESUME A NEW TYPE OF BRANCHING IS OCCURRING.

UNLIKE ONE OR TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE INFLUENCES FROM THESE EVENTS SPREAD VERY FAST NOW.

IMPLANT EFFECT NOW DROPPING, SIR.

THE SWORD, THE MIRROR, AND THE JEWEL ARE ALL TOGETHER NOW... THE TREE IS SWAYING...

AT THIS LEVEL OF INTENSITY, IT WILL INVOLVE EVERYTHING IN SIGHT...



SOMETHING OF SUBSTANCE, SOMETHING FRUITFUL, HAS BEEN EXCHANGED BETWEEN HER AND THE AMANOJAKU...

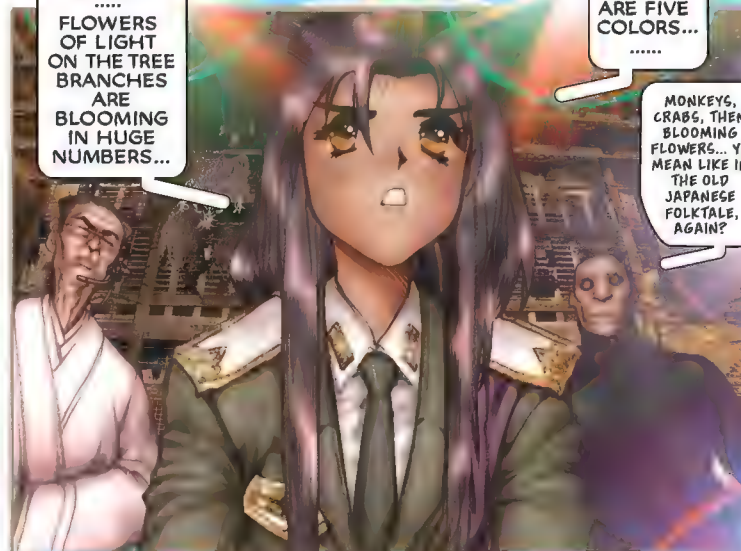


MAYBE A PERSIMMON...?

IF YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS, YOU CAN LEAVE THE ROOM.

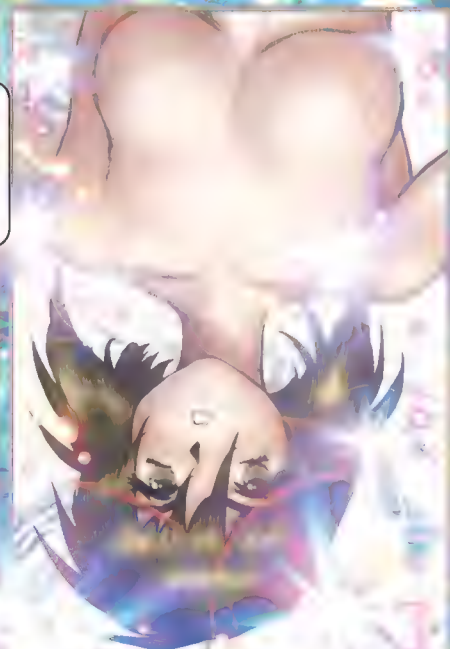


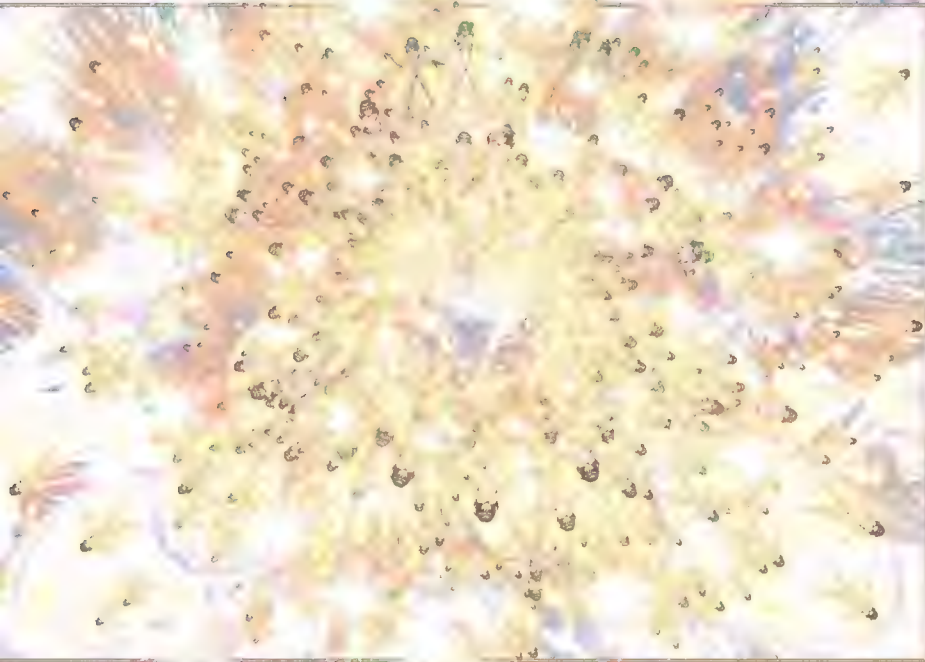
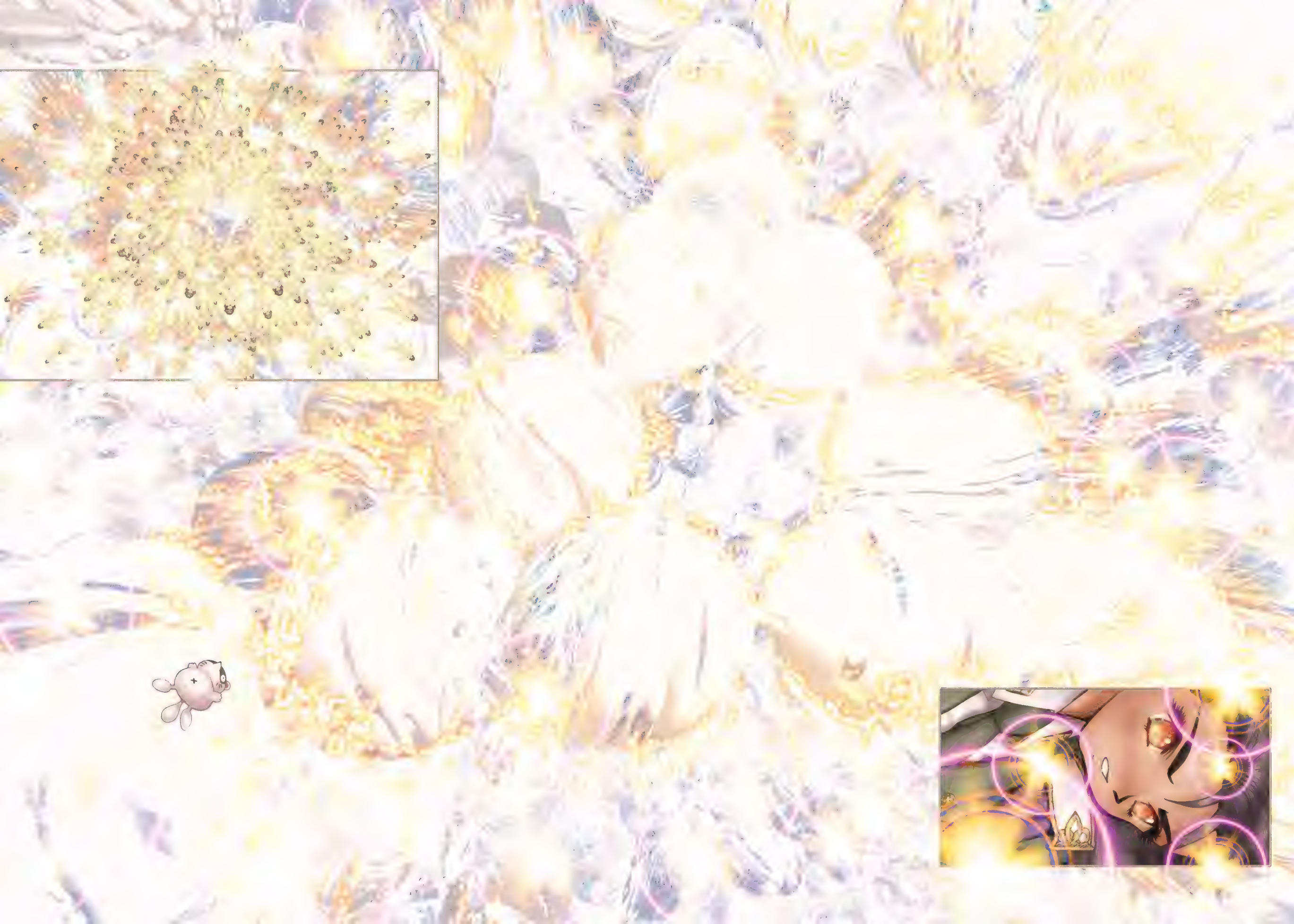
SHE'S...
.....
FLOWERS OF LIGHT ON THE TREE BRANCHES ARE BLOOMING IN HUGE NUMBERS...

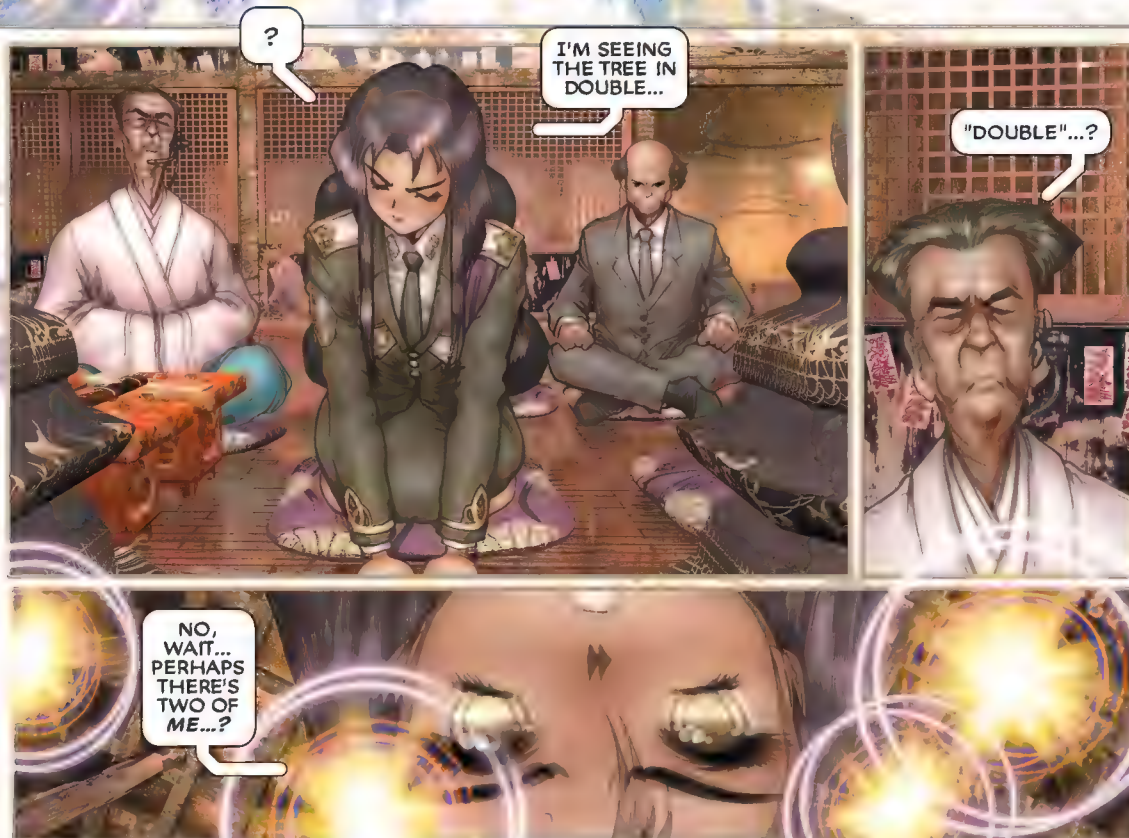
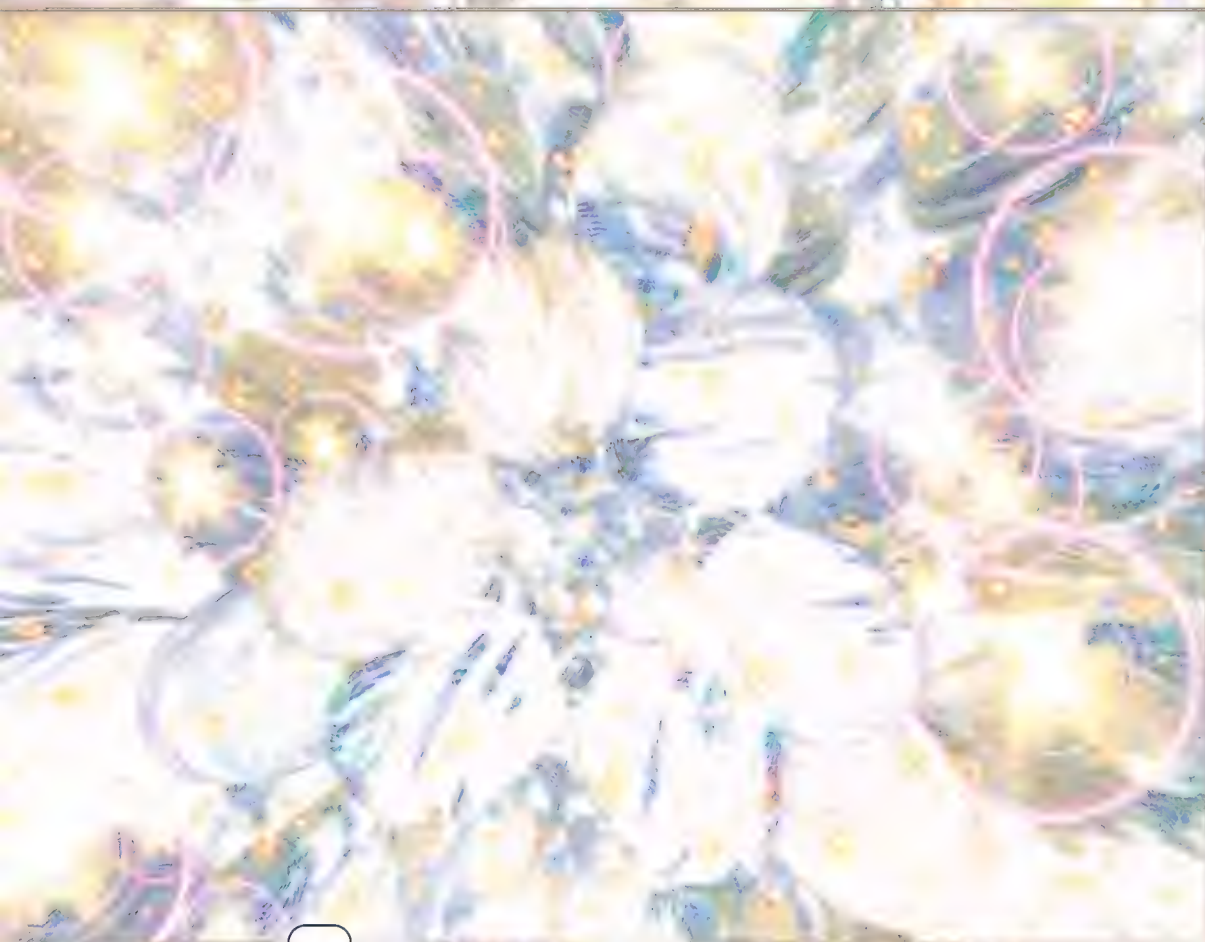


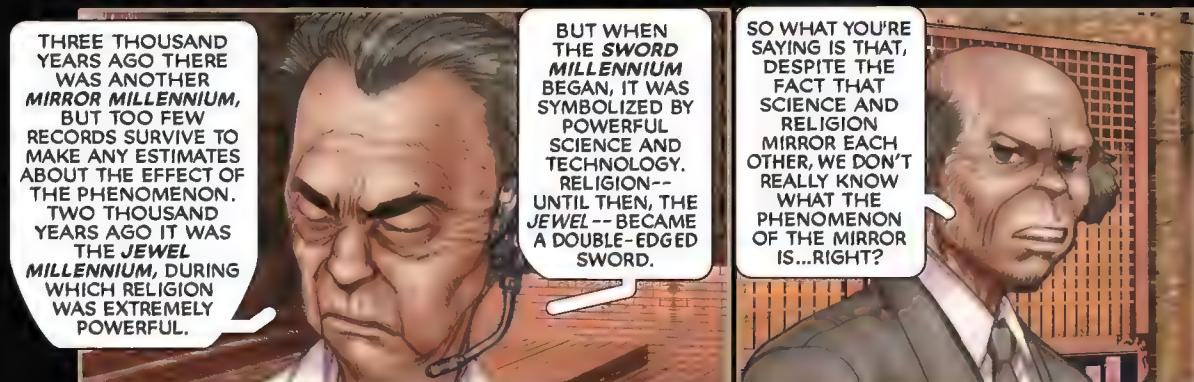
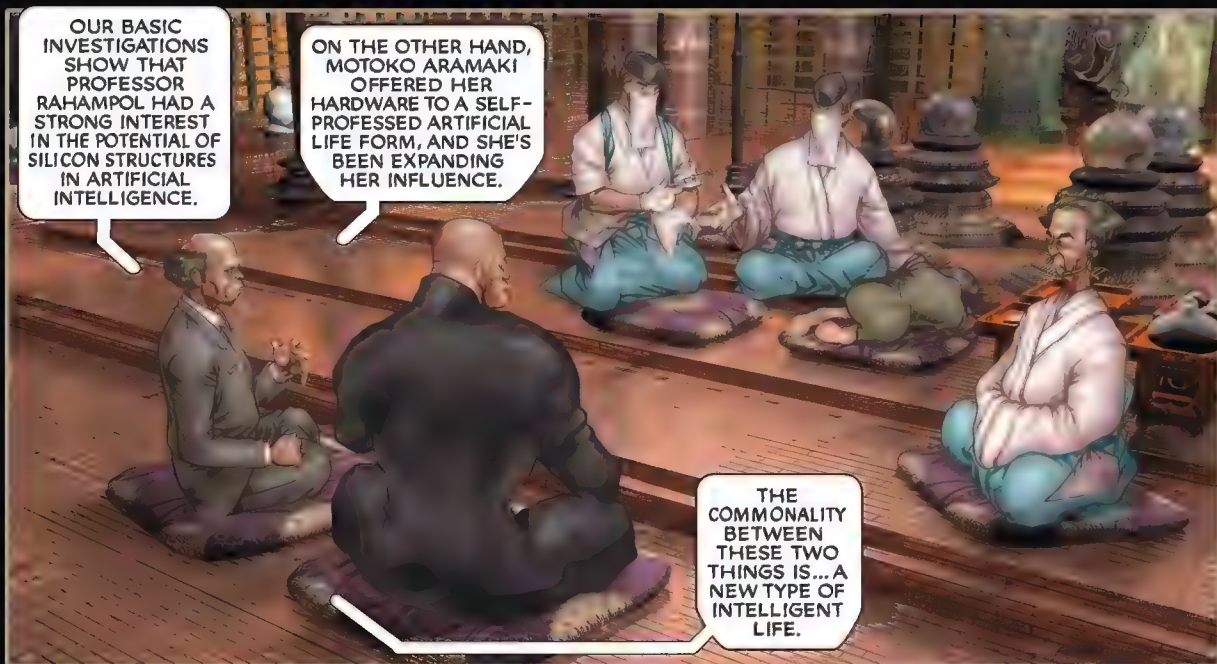
THERE ARE FIVE COLORS...
.....

MONKEYS, CRABS, THEN BLOOMING FLOWERS... YA MEAN LIKE IN THE OLD JAPANESE FOLKTALE, AGAIN?









The Three Souls... I'm not going to get into a discussion here of dualism or the "single spirit, four souls," etc., of the ancient *Shinto* religion. Although the story seems very "*Shinto*"-ish here, remember...it isn't *Shinto*.



SO IT SEEMS LIKE IN THE NEAR FUTURE WE HUMANS WILL HAVE TO CONFRONT THE PHENOMENON KNOWN AS INTELLIGENT ARTIFICIAL LIFE.

BUT IT'LL BE A MIRROR... IT'LL BE LIKE SEEING WHAT HUMANS HAVE DONE, YES?



YES. AND IT COULD OCCUR AT A VARIETY OF LEVELS, WITH IMPACTS THAT RANGE FROM LOW TO HIGH, AND INCLUDE CULTURE, THE ENVIRONMENT, POLITICS, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND RELIGION.

YOU WOULD BE CONFRONTING YOURSELF...



WELL, DON'T FORGET, SHE SAID "THE MIRROR SEEMS ASYMMETRICAL AND WARPED..."



WELL, THE UNIVERSE ITSELF IS ASYMMETRICAL.

THAT'S WHY IT EXISTS... AND THAT'S WHY IT'S EVOLVING.



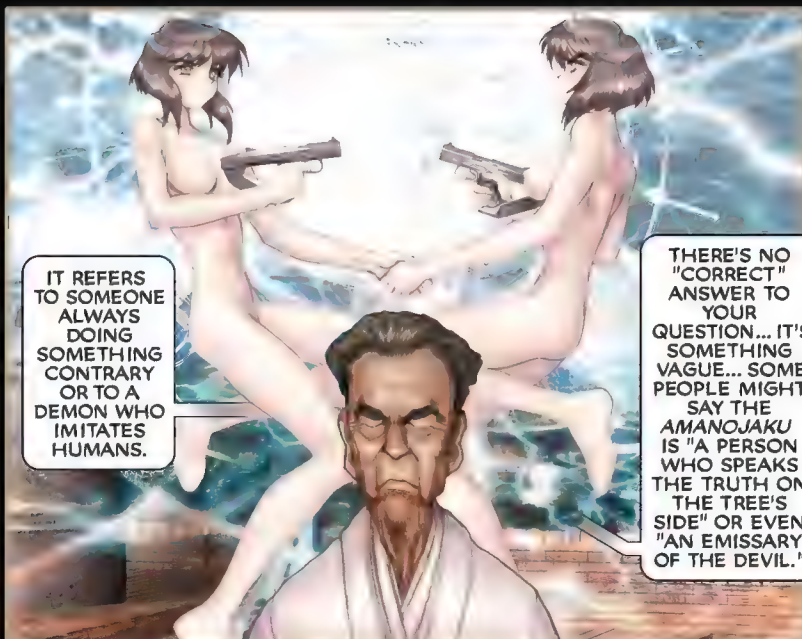
BUT...THERE'S ALSO THE LINE OF THOUGHT THAT SAYS OUR EXISTENCE IS LITTLE MORE THAN ONE NIGHT'S DREAM OF AN EMBRYO THAT WE CALL THE UNIVERSE...THAT THE MOVEMENTS OF THE TREE ARE JUST A SINGLE HEARTBEAT...

THERE AREN'T MANY GOOD EXAMPLES, AND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO SPEAK WITH CERTAINTY, BUT THE SWAYING OF THE TREE OCCURS WHEN THE AMANOJAKU ELEMENT HAS GROWN LARGE.

BUT HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THE AMANOJAKU IN FOLKLORE?



IT REFERS TO SOMEONE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING CONTRARY OR TO A DEMON WHO IMITATES HUMANS.



THERE'S NO "CORRECT" ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION... IT'S SOMETHING VAGUE... SOME PEOPLE MIGHT SAY THE AMANOJAKU IS "A PERSON WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH ON THE TREE'S SIDE" OR EVEN "AN EMISSARY OF THE DEVIL."

IN TAMAKI TAMAI'S REPORT, THE INVESTIGATION WAS FOCUSED ON SOMEONE WITH NO SIGNS OF THE STRESS SYNDROME UNIQUE TO CYBORGS.



NOT A NIHILISTIC PHILOSOPHER-TYPE, BUT A **POSITIVE REALIST**... A PERSONALITY TRAIT THE NEW LIFE-FORM WE'RE SEEING MAY HAVE INHERITED.



AND IF SO... WHAT HAPPENS?

SHE WILL SOON CONFRONT THIS.



UH... I'VE GOT A FRIEND IN THE POSEIDON SECURITY DEPARTMENT... WANT ME TO HAVE HIM OBSERVE HER MOVEMENTS?



NOT NOW... WE CAN DO THAT LATER, IF NEED BE.



WE CAN RESTART THE INVESTIGATION AS SOON AS TAMAI RECOVERS, BUT WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AROUND NOON FOR THAT TO HAPPEN.

WELL, SHE *DID* SAY THAT THIS MATTER HAD BEEN AROUND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS AND WOULD PROBABLY CONTINUE FOR ETERNITY... SO...



IT'S TRUE THAT WHAT IS GOING TO OCCUR TODAY IS ONLY A BEGINNING... A SINGLE TRANSIT POINT... BUT IT'S ALSO AN END POINT.

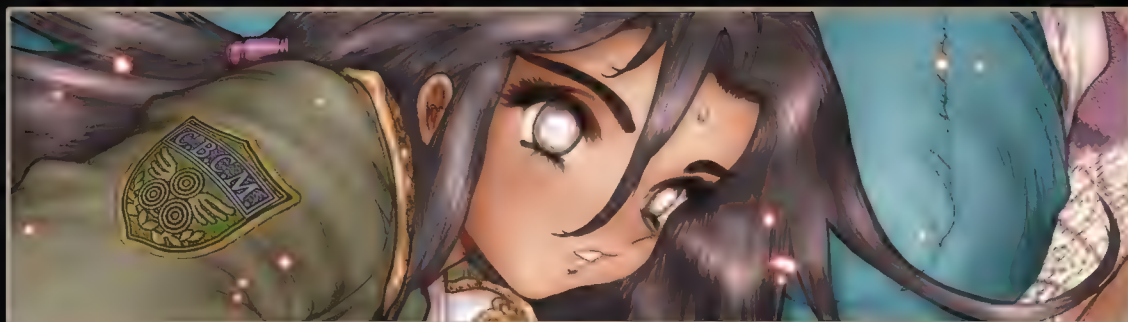
SINCE IT'S HAPPENING IN *REAL TIME*, I WANTED YOU TO BE PRESENT.

? BUT I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE IN THE BUSINESS OF VIEWING THE *FUTURE*...



THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ARE THE SAME THING.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS ON THE PART OF THE PERCEIVER...



MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE: THE END

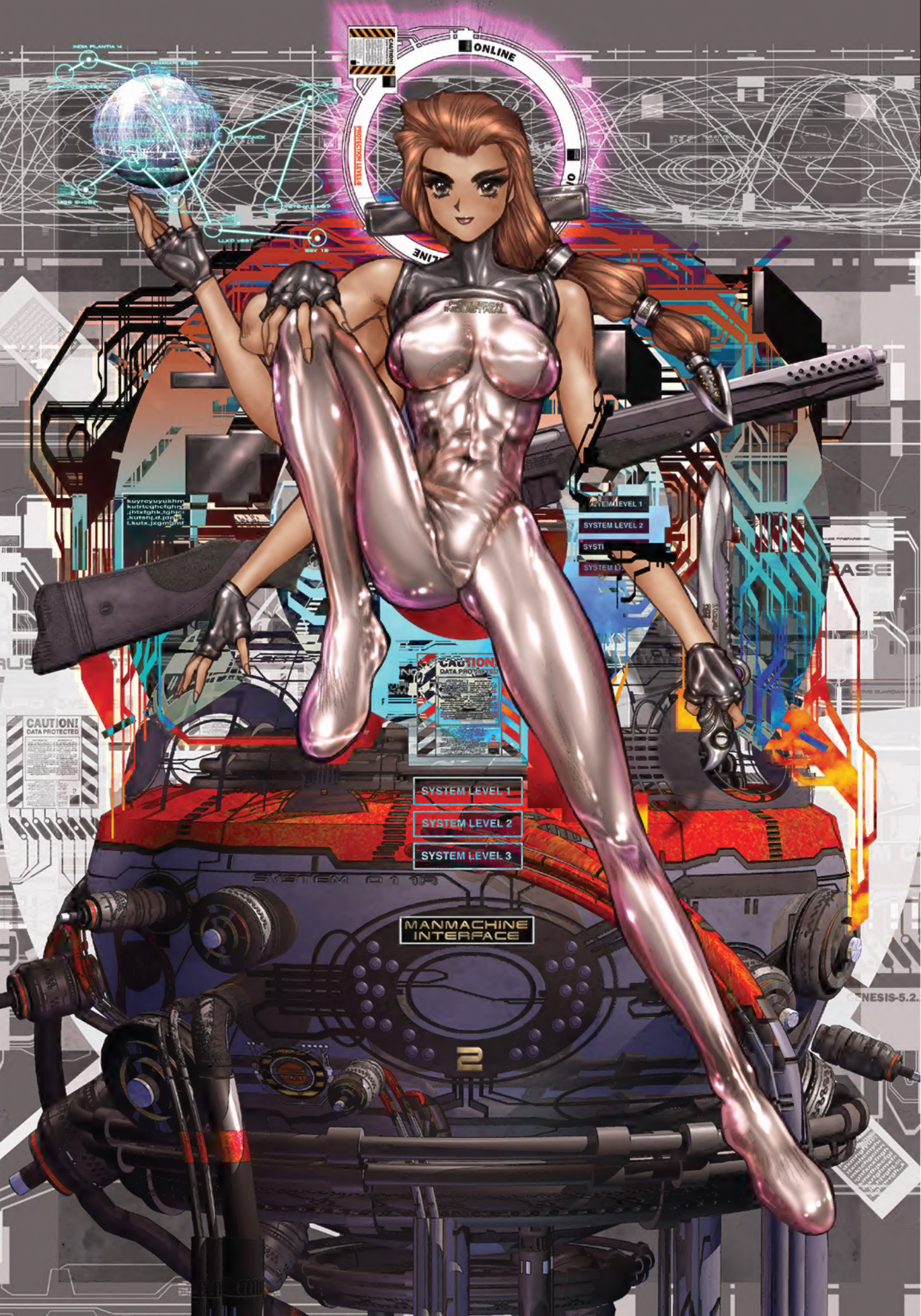
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CLOSED

MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE CONTROL SYSTEMS





AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

In 1983, Shirow Masamune published his first manga, "Black Magic" from *Atlas*, a science fiction *dojin* manga society (*dojin* is the Japanese term to describe an amateur fan publication).

In 1985, Shirow's first major work, "Appleseed," was published by Seishinsha, without being serialized in or submitted to a manga magazine, which is quite rare in the Japanese manga publishing industry. Shortly thereafter, Shirow set up his own company, and besides working on his own manga and illustration work, took on projects from the anime and game industry, as well as designing pens, air guns, and computer mice. Since 1996, he has created his artwork through the computer, and from 2000, graphics work in color, writing, and project development has occupied most of his time. He does not consider himself a mainstream professional manga artist, but his fans and supporters in the industry consider him to be one of the all-time great manga creators. Since before the days of the anime movement, Shirow's work has been recognized and highly respected outside Japan. He has been active in numerous anime and game projects but it is rare for him to take the helm of such projects, or even to have his name used prominently.



Shirow Masamune was born in Japan in Chuo Ward, Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture, on November 23, 1961. He still lives in the same district.

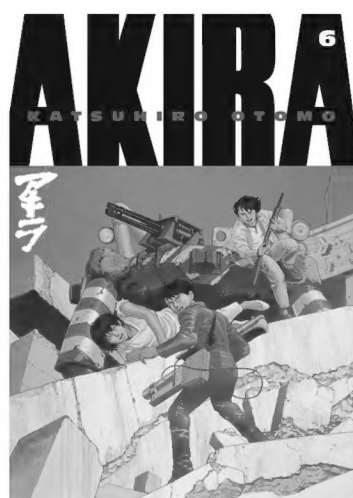
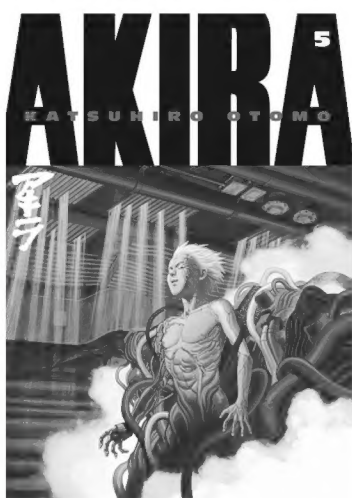
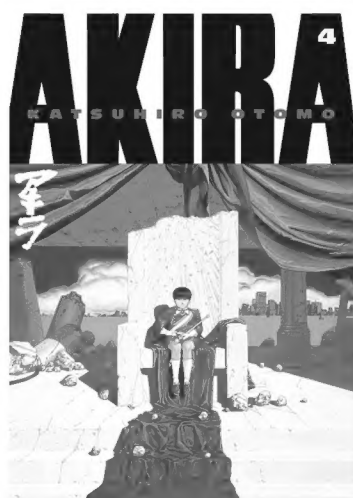
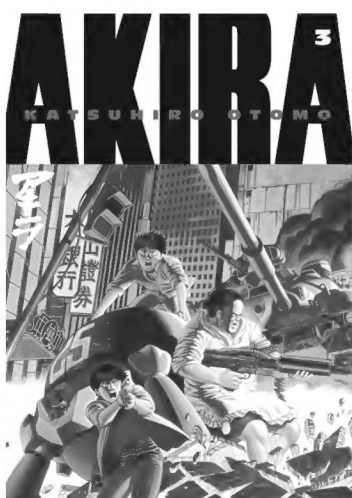
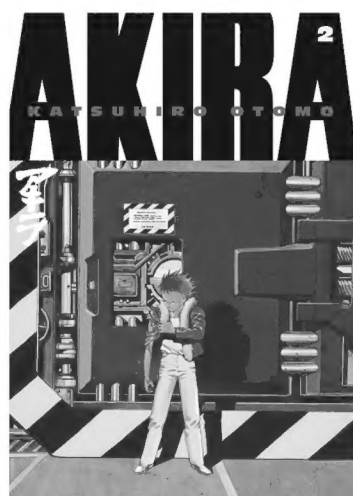
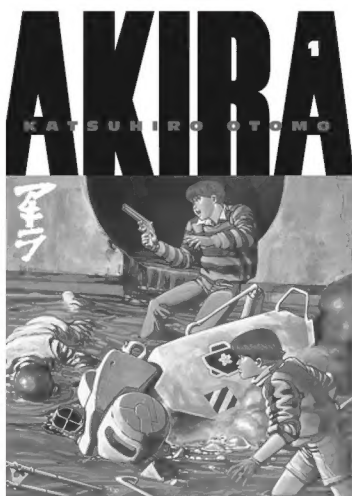
Career Chronology

1983 Publication of manga trade paperback "Black Magic" (Atlas, a *dojin* company)
1984 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed" (Seishinsha)
1985 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 2" (Seishinsha)
1986 Publication of manga trade paperback "Dominion" (Hakusensha)
1987 Co-directed, with Hiroyuki Kitakubo, the original video animation "Black Magic M-66"

1987 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 3" (Seishinsha)
1989 Publication of manga trade paperback "Appleseed 4" (Seishinsha)
1991 Publication of manga trade paperback "Kokaku Kidotai – The Ghost in the Shell" (Kodansha)
1991 Publication of manga trade paperback "Senjutsu Cho Kokaku Orion" (Seishinsha)
1992 Publication of artbook "Intron Depot" (Seishinsha)
1992 Serialization, though uncompleted, of manga "NEURO HARD – Hachi No Wakusei" (Fujimi Shobo)
1994 Cover art of the novelization by Nemuru Anzu, "Tokuso Senshatai Dominion" (Kadokawa Shoten)
1995 Publication of manga trade paperback "Dominion C-1" (Seishinsha)
1997 Poster portfolio "Kokaku Kidotai – Cyberdelics" (Kodansha)
1998 Illustrations in the novel "Jashin Hunter" vol 1 and 2 by Izumi Makoto (Seishinsha)
1998 Illustrations in the novel "Taimakan Akagami Kyoya" by Kotoda Kotaro (Media Works)
1998 Publication of artbook "Intron Depot 2: Blades" (Seishinsha)
1999 Illustration in the novel "Valeria File" vol 1 and 2 by Tani Koshu (Chuo

Koron Shinsha)

2001 Publication of manga tankobon "The Ghost in the Shell 2 – Man Machine Interface" (Kodansha)
2003 Publication of artbook "INTRON DEPOT 3 – BALISTICS" (Seishinsha)
2004 Publication of artbook "INTRON DEPOT 4 – BULLETS" (Seishinsha)
2006 Anime project "G3" starts (later to become Ghost Hound and RD produced by Production I.G.)
2008 Illustration of the novel "Classical Fantasy Within" by Shimada Soji, 7 out of 12 volumes published to date (Kodansha)
2009 Publication of manga trade paperback "Kokaku Kidotai 1.5 – Human Error Processor" (Kodansha)



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